

"The Middle People"
A History of the Launceston Chinese
Community

History Honours Thesis
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Abstract

The Launceston Chinese community makes up only a small proportion of the Launceston population, yet in spite of this fact it remains an active, cohesive cultural group. The community, however, in spite of being identifiably a group made up of a specific, racially defined, sector of the Launceston community is not exclusive. The group, although Chinese, is equally Australian and the members consider themselves "middle people", with a unique perspective on two vastly different cultures, which allows them to function socially with more alternatives than the either the Chinese living in China or Europeans living in Australia, a culturally European-based society.

Contributing factors for the existence of this situation come from many sources. The culture of the Australia as essentially a European colony, and the history of China, particularly in the last 160 years have both influenced immigration patterns. The political and social turmoil that China has undergone during this era has proved a powerful motivating factor for Chinese to emigrate. Australian history is of equal importance. The Australian demand for labour and the goldrushes provided economic prospects for Chinese and this proved a motivating factor in attracting Chinese to immigrate to Australia.

Tasmania's history of differences from other colonies and states provided opportunities for economic prospects without the same extent of racial antagonism experienced in other areas of Australia. Thus the Tasmanian tin industry drew much Chinese secondary immigration, and the concentrations of Chinese in the North East gave them the cultural freedom and security to develop a harmonious and even mutually beneficial relationship with European immigrant sectors of the community.

The Chinese community of the twentieth century, particularly the post World War II era, saw the Tasmanian Chinese community linked more strongly with some of the problems between Asians and Europeans in other parts of Australia. This was because of Federation in 1901 and the jurisdiction for immigration legislation passing from the hands of the colonial government to that of the federal government. Legislative persecution of Tasmanian Chinese inspired by racial disputes that originated in different colonies ensued.

In the era 1966-1973 changing attitudes led to the dismantling of the legislation, known as the White Australia Policy and a wave of educated, enterprising and entrepreneurial Chinese immigrants began to arrive in Launceston. Through an examination of the composition of the modern Launceston Chinese community, its concerns, organisations and activities, this study will portray a community neither fully Chinese nor fully Australian; neither assimilated nor isolated, and also not strictly both Australian and Chinese. Instead they are a "middle people" who have synthesised their own unique culture out of comparing and reconciling aspects of both Australian and Chinese culture and thus synthesising something completely new.

Chapter 1. Chinese Immigration to Australia: 1830s to 1901

The history of the Chinese community in Launceston is essentially the history of a unique immigrant community. The Chinese were different to other immigrant groups during the period from the 1830s to 190 in their transience, their social isolation, and the degree of persecution they endured. The community can only be truly understood when viewed in light of the context within which it came to exist. Social, political, economic, and personal factors in China, Australia, Tasmania and Launceston itself all contributed to motivate Chinese into emigration, and the effect that that emigration has had on the individuals who form the community.

Immigration can be viewed as motivated by two factors. Historians often discuss a "push" and "pull" effect, where adverse conditions in the native country "push" people into emigration, while advantages in the host country "pull", or attract them into immigration.¹

The turmoil of the last one hundred and fifty years of China's history² does much to explain the large number of Chinese emigrants leaving China in search of survival, security, wealth, and increased opportunity. With the context of the situation in China acting as a "push", a significantly improved alternative was certainly presented by the "pull" of Australian opportunities when considered against the option of starvation or political persecution. The main opportunities that attracted Chinese immigrants to the Australian colonies, in the era from the 1830s to 1901, were the potential for wealth as labourers and as miners of gold, and, later, tin.

Chinese Labour in Australia

The history of Chinese immigration to Australia begins in New South Wales. Even before 1820 there were Chinese sailors in Sydney, either arranging to be paid off there, or jumping ship.³ However the first sustained wave of Chinese immigration to Australia was due to the character of the New South Wales colony. New South Wales was a rural, colonial settlement in an unfamiliar and often climatically unsuitable region for the European forms of agriculture being attempted in it. The success or failure of the colony relied upon the availability of cheap labour in order to take advantage of cheap or granted land. New South Wales was a penal colony from 1788 to 1840 and the convicts filled the role in the early days under a system of assigned labour. From even these early days, however, the Chinese as well as Indians were under consideration as alternative labour sources. Rolls noted that even before the settlement of the New South Wales colony and in its earliest days there were suggestions from several men in England, including Sir George Young⁴ and Sir Joseph Banks⁵

¹ See the work of historians such as Michael Roe, James Jupp and Jean Martin

² For an account of the specifics of the Chinese situation, see Appendix 1.

³ Rolls, E. 1993, *Sojourners: Flowers and the Wide Sea*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Queensland, p.32

⁴ Sir George Young (1732-1810) was a British Naval Admiral. With Joseph Banks and Thomas Mansfield he submitted a proposal for the establishment of a colony in New South Wales in 1788, suggesting its use as a port of call on the trade routes to China and for the cultivation of New Zealand flax. He was also a humanitarian, testifying to the House of Commons on the evils of the Slave Trade. In: Sidney Lee (ed.) *Dictionary of National Biography (Volume 63)*, Smith, Elder & Co., London

that Indian or Chinese coolies be brought in as labour. They considered them "more diligent, more tractable, less discomfiting than convicts."⁶

In the late 1820s, however, the influences of anti-transportationist movements led to the end of transportation in New South Wales in 1840 and in Tasmania in 1856. Other colonies had never relied on the system in the first place and so once again Indians and Chinese were considered as possible sources of labour. Under a system of indenture Indian coolies were brought to Australia in 1837, and that year some pastoralists attempted to import Chinese labour also. The experiment failed due to the loss of treasury bills en route that were forwarded to defray expenses. but in July of 1848, "a consignment of 100 adult Chinese and 21 boys were shipped at Amoy for New South Wales."⁷ Initially the importation of Chinese labour was difficult because of the Chinese government's prohibitions of emigration by its subjects, but the 1860 Peking convention⁸ which legalised the active recruitment of Chinese labour from treaty ports, combined with the relative cheapness of transporting labourers from China, in leading to the popularity of this system amongst labour-hungry pastoralists. The labour shortage was further exacerbated when European and Chinese labourers alike began deserting their employers to seek their own fortunes in the wake of the discovery of gold. In spite of this, the amount of Chinese who actually came to Australia as labour were relatively few. Choi suggests the numbers were so low as to be "probably less than 3,000 by the time gold was discovered."⁹

Although the pastoralists may have been pleased with Chinese labour, competing European labourers were less than pleased with the system. Chinese were widespread in the areas of the Victorian furniture trade, cooks and shearers in the pastoral industry, ringbarking and land-clearing, the development of the banana trade in Northern Queensland, and as crews for British shipping companies.¹⁰ In 1866 European labourers went on strike for the first time to protest Chinese workers, feeling that the Chinese willingness to work longer hours at menial tasks for low wages undermined their own attempts at improving working conditions for labourers. This difference in work ethic led to a division along racial lines in the industries affected by the dispute, and caused ill-feeling towards the Chinese on a new plane. Previous to the importation of Chinese labourers, there were negative feelings between members of different races, countries, regions and towns. Now economics had drawn

⁵ Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) was a botanist and president of the Royal Society. He accompanied Cook's expedition on the *Endeavour* on which they proved to Britain the existence of Australia, and with sir George Young and Thomas Mansfield submitted a proposal for the establishment of a colony in New South Wales, citing his scientific observations of the advantages of the region. In: Sidney Lee, *Op Cit.* Volume 3

⁶ Rolls, E. *Op Cit.* p.38

⁷ Sleeman, J.H.C. 1933, *White China: An Austral-Asian Sensation!* Published by the Author, Sydney, p.262

⁸ See Appendix 1.

⁹ Choi, C.Y. 1975, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, Sydney University Press, Sydney p.18

¹⁰ Jupp, J. 1995, *Immigration*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p.45

a clear division between Europeans and Asians over an important issue. The battle lines were drawn.¹¹

The emerging strength of the trade union movement contributed to this problem and united European workers against Chinese competition. The economic recession of 1886-1888 resulted in lower wages and high unemployment and this added to the problems. In times of high unemployment migrant labour is seen as competition.¹² This situation is further complicated by the fact that some industries rely upon cheap labour as the means for overcoming economic difficulties. Therefore immigrants get caught up in class struggles as well as race. It was at this time that the infamous White Australia Policies emerged in their infancy. Rolls suggests that at this time:

An uncompromising White Australia attitude developed during the 1880s with strengthening and widening trade unions protecting wages. Miners in all colonies joined the Amalgamated Miners' Association, seamen the federated Seamen's Union, shearers the Amalgamated Shearer's Union. Intercolonial trade union congresses were called to discuss immigration.¹³

Although the longevity of Tasmania's convict assignment system circumvented the problems of dealing with Chinese labour and its opposition, the legislation that was born of the conflict in other colonies most certainly had an effect on the Tasmanian situation.

Chinese Miners on the Australian Goldfields

Any study of Chinese immigration to Australia must necessarily include a discussion of the role that the Chinese played in the Australian goldrushes in New South Wales and Victoria. The arrival en masse of large numbers of Chinese miners¹⁴, the ill-feeling that developed between European and Chinese miners on the goldfields, and the racial legislation that resulted from this antagonism had far reaching implications for all of Australia. Because of secondary immigration from the mainland goldfields to the minor Tasmanian goldfields and the tin fields, and the federal legislation that affected the state, Tasmania was no exception

The discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria in 1851 followed closely on the heels of the 1849 California goldrushes. The success of some Chinese miners in California in acquiring wealth with which they were able to return to China inspired similar hopes that the same might be

¹¹ See the discussion of this division in Sleeman, J.H.C. Op Cit. p. 266

¹² The irony of the situation is that economists today suggest that, rather than taking jobs from locals, immigrants actually create jobs and stimulate the economy. The demands of migrants for consumer goods and services actually creates work. For example, housing and infrastructure, and the injection of "venture capital". This concept is discussed in: Secretariat to the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies, 1987, *Understanding Immigration*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, pp.17-18. Although the lack of wages legislation and workplace arbitration avenues in the nineteenth century cause considerable differences in how immigrants affected the economy, the basic principle still applies. Coghlan also points out that the small number of Chinese and their propensity for occupations not particularly favoured by non-Europeans meant that Chinese labour in reality had little impact on the Europeans' wages and conditions in Coghlan, T.A. 1969, *Labour and Industry in Australia From the First Settlement in 1788 to the Establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901 (Volume III)*, Macmillan of Australia, Melbourne, pp.1332-1333

¹³ Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.249

¹⁴ For details see Table 1.

possible in Australia. The British Opium wars in China also contributed an influx of Chinese miners hoping to relieve the poverty resulting from the wars. Chinese gold-seekers arrived in Melbourne from as early as 1849. The prospect of mining was also appealing to those Chinese who were most likely to be affected by the adverse economic conditions in China. The already poor labourers and farmers who were already struggling to survive in China were the most likely to be affected by the poverty resulting from the war. It was men of this background who were most suited to work on the goldfields. They were actually better suited to the work than city-dwellers and non-labourers. The skills that they possessed were the same as those required working mines on the goldfields. Rolls has noted the advantage of the labourer on the goldfields, writing that:

If hands were soft, diggers developed blisters on blisters. Backs ached. It took weeks of pain for hands to harden and spines to limber up. And it was an advantage if a man could draw and sharpen his own picks. Make his own shovel handles. He had to be able to fell timber and split it for slabbing shafts. He had to make a windlass...be able to dig a straight shaft up to 80 metres deep and judge whether the walls would hold without timbering...So many had gained experience digging wells for water. He had to be an expert with explosives.¹⁵

This combination of factors makes it understandable that poor Chinese arrived on the Australian goldfields in large numbers. In 1861 the census records 12,988 Chinese in New South Wales and 24,732 in Victoria.¹⁶

The influx of Chinese goldminers further exacerbated the ill-feeling and paranoia that had developed in the labour market just previous to the goldrushes. A feature of the Australian goldfields that was different to that of California was the relative size of the goldfields. The surface area of alluvial claims in California was twenty-five times the size of New South Wales claims and seventy times the size of the Victorian claims.¹⁷ In light of these facts, Yarwood has suggested that "the effect was to magnify the size of the mining population in a valley, to accelerate the pace of exploration. And heighten the individual's sense of urgency in competing for a resource that was limited in extent, though extremely valuable."¹⁸ Adding to the tension was the wariness many Chinese felt towards the British because of the war in China¹⁹, still fresh in the minds of those who had been forced to abandon their home country as a result of it. This attitude kept them separate from the European miners, and therefore the understanding that might have developed through close contact never occurred.

Also a contributing factor in the antagonism between the Chinese and European miners on the goldfields was the difference in attitudes that the two cultural groups generally held towards mining. The European miners tended to be interested primarily in large, immediate gains. They worked new claims, then when the easily accessed gold had been removed, moved to a new claim. The Chinese method of gold prospecting generally was to "work on the abandoned fields washing,

¹⁵ Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.87

¹⁶ See Table 1.

¹⁷ Yarwood, A.T & Knowling, M.J. 1982, *Race Relations in Australia: A History*, Methuen Australia, North Ryde, New South Wales, p.165

¹⁸ Ibid, p.165

¹⁹ See Appendix 1.

rewashing, and rewashing the mullock heaps and tailings for the carelessly missed gold that had come to be regarded as the perquisite of women and children"²⁰ and this sort of endeavour led to resentment amongst the European miners who felt that the gold that the Chinese collected should rightly have been theirs. The collection of the missed gold was a patient, labour intensive enterprise and the Chinese felt that they had earned the gold that they collected and the European miners had abandoned the sites in any case.

Language barriers further inflamed the situation, as there was no common language in which to solve any disputes that arose. It was against Chinese law to teach Europeans Chinese languages²¹, even if they had any inclination to learn them. Examples of racial violence and harassment on the goldfields abound. Rolls' accounts of how:

Children threw stones at [the Chinese] when they came into Bendigo or Ballarat. Men dragged them along the ground by their pigtales as targets, while others pelted them with stones...Most of the trouble was over claims, theft or water rights...there would be fists and pick handles swung, knives and pistols drawn²²

give quite a good indication of the atmosphere on the goldfields when it came to Chinese miners. Of all the altercations, the Lambing Flat²³ riots are the best remembered.²⁴ Gold was discovered there in March 1860 and with other goldfields giving out and many miners looking for a last resort chance to make their fortunes in gold. By October there were approximately 1600 miners on the field, 500 of who were Chinese.²⁵ The desperation of miners and competition over insufficient water on the field caused racial tensions to come to a head. Yarwood's account of the events at this time have described how:

The first "roll ups" occurred when 500 diggers marching to the strains of a German band moved the Chinese off their claims and destroyed their property. Thus began a series of ejections that culminated on 30 June 1861 in the most brutal and massive assault of the rushes. About 3000 men drove the Chinese from one field after another²⁶

In February 1861 the European miners formed the Miners Protective League, adding to tensions. In his first address, elected secretary Charles Allen said that "The League's first consideration will be getting rid of Chinamen."²⁷ The League indicated its readiness for conflict by conducting daily drilling with arms and petitioned the governor, asking that Chinese miners be excluded from the goldfields

²⁰ Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.103

²¹ Chinese languages were considered the property of China, and anyone caught teaching "barbarian" Europeans was treated as a traitor, subject to torture and execution.

²² Rolls, E. Op Cit. , p.121

²³ Now known as the town of Young, New South Wales

²⁴ For a full discussion of the Lambing Flat riots, their causes, implications and consequences, see: Connolly, C.N. 'Miner's Rights: Explaining the 'Lambing Flat' Riots of 1860-61' in Curthoys, A. & Markus, A. (eds.) *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Working Class in Australia*, Hale and Ironmonger Pty. Ltd. Neutral Bay, New South Wales, 1978

²⁵ Yarwood, A.T & Knowling, M.J. Op Cit. p.172

²⁶ Ibid, p.172

²⁷ Charles Allen, quoted in Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.166

Restricting Chinese Immigration

This pressure added to legislation already in place restricting Chinese immigration into the colonies; precursors to the group of federal legislation that became known as the White Australia policy. Jupp has described the progression of these specifically anti-Chinese immigration laws to prohibit all non-Europeans after an inter-colonial conference in 1896, writing that:

In 1897 Western Australia copied Natal in British South Africa by introducing a 'dictation test' for immigrants... Western Australia was followed by New South Wales in 1898 and Tasmania in 1899. These laws formed the basis for Commonwealth legislation [in 1901] and marked a departure from previous colonial restrictions since the 1850's that had been directed specifically against the Chinese.²⁸

The Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act was enacted after Federation in 1901 and signalled the passing of responsibility for immigration legislation from the colonies to the federal government. In 1901 there were already 30,000 Chinese in Australia, many of whom were naturalised under the laws of the colonies, and the government could not entirely restrict the entry of students, ministers of religion and merchants²⁹ and therefore legislation was unable to exclude all Chinese from Australia. Because of these exceptions, and the concessions that the government was forced to make for trade and diplomatic reasons, the principle of the Act was thus to discourage permanent settlement in Australia of Chinese, rather than trying to rid Australia of Chinese altogether.³⁰ The means by which this was achieved was the dictation test that Western Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania had already implemented before federation. Choi has described how:

The original Act, in clause 3a, defined a prohibited immigrant as a person who when asked to do so by an officer, failed to write out at dictation a passage of fifty words in a European language. The choice of language as well as the choice of whether or not to administer the test lay in the hands of the immigration officer.³¹

This legislation managed to circumvent any criticism of the system as exclusionary on the basis of race, claiming that language proficiency was the basis for admission or refusal. The discriminatory powers of the immigration officers, however, allowed the legislation to be even more selective and specifically exclusionary than ever.

The legislation did not only affect those Chinese wishing to immigrate, but also the Chinese already residing in Australia. This situation became even more difficult with the prevention of non-Europeans from being granted British citizenship in 1903. Jupp has pointed out that:

²⁸ Jupp, J. *Op Cit.* pp.49-50

²⁹ Choi, C.Y. *Op Cit.* p.39

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.39

³¹ *Ibid*, p.39

Those who could not acquire citizenship had very limited rights in Australia and could, under certain circumstances, be deported...Apart from not having the vote, aliens in most states were unable to own freehold property, especially agricultural land. They were barred from public sector employment and were often denied hawking or other licences. They had no right to bring their relatives into Australia and many were faced with the alternative of deserting their families or returning to them in China.³²

Thus the 1850s goldrushes and their aftermath were an important era in the history of Chinese immigration to Australia. The competition between European and Chinese miners augmented the inter-racial tensions that had already resulted from labour competition in the colonies. The legislation that emerged from this tension placed restrictions on immigration and rights of Chinese in Australia and after Federation in 1901, these laws became the jurisdiction of the federal government, overriding the Tasmania's colonial legislation powers in this area. Through an evolution of ever more complex laws, a 'White Australia' policy evolved, fuelled by paranoid fears of diseases such as smallpox and leprosy. This legislation and its successors remained in place until the era 1966-1973, when changing social values led to the progressive removal of racist legislation, culminating in 1973 when a policy of non-discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or nationality in the selection of migrants was finally enacted.

Early Accounts of the Chinese in Tasmania

The early history of Chinese immigration to Tasmania in many areas is vastly different to the experience of the rest of Australia. Walden suggests that "The pattern of Chinese settlement, the composition of the tin-mining population, [and] the nature of the tin-mining industry"³³ were the four features unique to the Tasmanian experience of Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century.

The first Chinese in Tasmania were few in number. The first recorded entries were on 15 July 1830 when nine Chinese artisans were brought in by aspiring labour agent J. Flaherty,³⁴ and one Chinese arriving aboard the *Brazil Packet* from Port Phillip on 21 September 1839.³⁵

One way in which Tasmania was unique was the absence of tensions over Chinese labour that plagued the other colonies. The reason for this was the convict assignment system until 1846 and the subsequent probation system that was in place in Van Diemen's Land, which persisted until 1856; 16 years longer than in New South Wales. There was no shortage of cheap labour, and thus no real need to import of Chinese labour. However, there were actually three Chinese convicts sent from Mauritius to Van Diemen's Land in 1844.³⁶

There were also Chinese who arrived in Tasmania unintentionally, as the result of unscrupulous labour merchants and ship's captains. On 13 April 1855 The *Lady Montague*, a ship

³² Jupp, J. Op Cit. pp.49-50

³³ Walden, S. 'Chinese in the North East' in Launceston Historical Society: Papers and Proceedings, Volume 3, 1991, p.76

³⁴ There is a further account in: Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.33

³⁵ *Cornwall Chronicle*, 21 September 1839

³⁶ For a full account of these three convicts see: Rolls, E. Op Cit. pp.33-34

from China with a boatload of Chinese labourers bound for the guano islands³⁷ arrived in Hobart. The passengers had been told that they were headed to California, and once they discovered the trickery they committed suicide in droves. The captain of the ship was an alcoholic and of somewhat unstable mental health and prolonged the voyage in hopes of extra pay, causing all the food and supplies to spoil. The ship stopped in Hobart en route, by which time most of the passengers and crew were starving and ill and 194 had died. Rolls has recounted that:

Deaths continued while the ship was at anchor. A guard boat rowed around it day and night to sink the bodies thrown overboard. They weighted them with stones. Then a woman died suddenly in Campbell Street. At the inquest the coroner brought down the verdict: 'Died from the Effects of eating unwholesome Fish'. Two men lay dangerously ill in the Colonial Hospital from the same cause. The rumour flew round Hobart that the dead Chinese had poisoned the fish. Crabs or fish had certainly fed well on one body that washed ashore...On 30 April the ship continued on her way with apparently healthy passengers. One of the apprentices, crippled in an accident, stayed behind.³⁸

After medical assistance and fresh supplies, the ship and its remaining passengers, seemingly in good health, left again on 30 April, but one of the crew stayed behind after being crippled in an accident.³⁹ Victims of a similar scam were 119 the passengers of the *Louisiana* in 1856, although luckily not of the same horrendous misfortunes. The captain of the ship had taken on the passengers who had not contracted to pay poll tax, but were headed for Melbourne. The captain told them that they had booked for Australia, not Melbourne, and that he would take them no further, nor provide further rations. The passengers took him to court and won.⁴⁰ Some, while awaiting the outcome, earned their keep hawking silks, shawls, fans feathers, and, to the horror of some residents, what were perceived to be "the most obscene and brutal and disgustingly offensive prints and paintings which can be conceived by the most depraved, even of their own country"⁴¹, but which were actually erotic pictures copied from Chinese classical drawings.⁴²

The passengers from the *Louisiana* were waylaid in Tasmania for some time. During this period some entrepreneurial Tasmanians had been searching for gold. The Fingal Gold Exploration Company, with a £2000 grant had been employing Europeans to try to find gold, but the seventy men had only managed to find 160 ounces in five months.⁴³ Rolls has suggested that "The committee thought Chinese might do better and they talked two or three passengers off the *Louisiana* who were

³⁷ The Guano Islands are off the coast of Peru and produce guano, a highly nutritious type of manure from a bird unique to the islands that is used as fertiliser. The work in processing the guano is extremely unpleasant, and administration of labour during this period was notoriously harsh. Some Chinese labourers who had been sent there did return to China and horror stories were widespread enough that the passengers of the *Lady Montague* would have known what implications their being sent there would have.

³⁸ Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.53

³⁹ Ibid, p.53

⁴⁰ Most had tickets contracting them to be taken to Port Phillip, and for those who had only contracted to "Australia", the court deemed that Tasmania was Australasia, not Australia proper, and therefore Launceston not a port in Australia.

⁴¹ *Cornwall Chronicle*, 13 December 1856, p.4

⁴² Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.139

⁴³ Ibid, pp.154-155

waiting on the court decision about their passage to Melbourne into testing the Fingal field south-east of Launceston towards the central coast."⁴⁴ They were given supplies, but their attempts were also largely unsuccessful, despite high hopes and forty to fifty men, the workforce supplemented by Chinese from the *Derwent*, working there in March 1852.

There were other similar explorations at Black Boy⁴⁵ (now Mathinna) and the Nine Mile Springs⁴⁶. Nine Mile Springs did prove a payable goldfield and attracted Chinese from the Victorian goldfields, particularly as claims on the Ballarat goldfields gave out.⁴⁷ There was also gold reported on the Hellyer River⁴⁸. In order to decide whether to further explore this region:

All the Chinese in Launceston met at their temple to consult the gods...It was well appointed. Wah Foong, the keeper, had just imported a big new pair of gongs from China. Bunches of flowers both fresh and paper stood in vases and lay on tables. Candles burnt in ornate paper-covered lanterns. The miners burnt incense, let off long strings of crackers, sprinkled the floor with tea and brandy the presented wooden trays of food to the chief god: whole sucking pigs, rice, chickens with their heads turned up towards him, vegetables, preserved oysters in tightly-woven wicker baskets.⁴⁹

A party was sent to explore the Hellyer region, but they found that they had to work in mud, and sometimes waist deep in water, and the "gold was patchy and unpredictable; sometimes it lay in the bottom of gutters, in other places on high ledges."⁵⁰ Also, getting food and supplies in and out of the region was more effort than the gold was worth, and the Chinese deserted the field and headed back the Nine Mile Springs. The mine there eventually gave out, and the miners returned to Hellyer for a short time, but "there was not enough gold in Tasmania to attract more than a hundred Chinese at a time. The attraction of the 1870s was the Palmer River in north Queensland."⁵¹

In 1871 James Smith⁵² discovered tin at Mount Bischoff on the West Coast of Tasmania, and in 1874 George Renison Bell⁵³ discovered it in the Boobyalla River⁵⁴ in the North-East. These

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp.154-155

⁴⁵ Black Boy was the first name for Mathinna. For the location and that of other tin mining towns mentioned see Map 1.

⁴⁶ Nine Mile Springs was the first name for Lefroy. See Map 1.

⁴⁷ Rolls, E. Op Cit. pp.184-186

⁴⁸ Hellyer River is on the North West coast of Tasmania, near Burnie

⁴⁹ Rolls, E. Op Cit. pp.184-5

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.185

⁵¹ Ibid, p.187

⁵² James "Philosopher" Smith (1827-1897) was born in George Town and a Flour Miller by trade. He spent 1851-53 on the Victorian goldfields and when he returned to Tasmania he discovered gold on the Forth River and at Mount Cleveland and tin at Mount Bischoff. He sold his shares in the company he formed to mine what became the richest tin mine in the world before it paid its first dividend but was granted an annual salary by parliament. He died in Launceston and was buried at Forth. In Nairn, B. Serle, G. (eds) *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Volume 6) Carlton, Victoria, 1981. pp. 146-147

⁵³ George Renison Bell (1840-1913) was born in Bothwell and had a rural career in Tasmania and New Zealand until 1870 when he worked at the Mathinna gold diggings for three years. Worked with James Smith at Mt Bischoff for several months. Qualified as a mining engineer at the Ballarat School of Mines then went prospecting. Discovered tin at Mt Cameron in 1874 the Briseis Mine and several smaller tin mines in the North East. In *The Northern Scene*, 14 April 1982, p.14

⁵⁴ See Map 1.

discoveries were to prove far more significant events for Chinese immigration to Tasmania than gold ever did. "Economically Tasmania had been at a low ebb in the late 1870s which the tin and mining boom changed"⁵⁵

Between 1873 and 1883, Australia supplied one-quarter of the world's tin. For eight of those years it was the leading producer...A depression in prices closed the Cornish mines. Australia's discoveries were made just as the prices began to lift again...The Chinese miners did not have to spend time learning the craft.⁵⁶

Unlike the situation on the New South Wales and Victorian goldfields, Chinese and European miners worked together mining tin. On the Native Youth claim at Lefroy⁵⁷, the Chinese had sold a claim to a European company with the stipulation that half the miners employed had to be Chinese, so the claim was mined by twelve Europeans and twelve Chinese.⁵⁸ A gold rush at Mount Arthur caused most European miners in the North-Eastern tin fields to desert tin for the chance of gold, and at this point the Chinese practically took over the operations in the area. In 1881 there were 700 Chinese at Weldborough⁵⁹ and 300 at Garibaldi^{60, 61}. The Chinese comprised 19.94% of the male population in tin mining districts in the North-Eastern region of Tasmania during this period, and in Ringarooma the Chinese outnumbered Europeans at a ratio of two Chinese for every European.⁶² But in spite of the high numbers in certain areas, the Chinese were very concentrated. 85.5% of all Tasmanian Chinese lived in this region.⁶³

These figures were unusual in comparison to the other Australian colonies, and this has been considered a contributing factor, along with the less competitive nature of the tin mining industry with its fluctuating tin prices to which the Chinese tribute system of working was ideally suited, a conservative press, and the lack of volatile Irish and American miners, to the fact that Tasmania dissented on the introduction of inter-colonial legislation discriminating against Chinese.⁶⁴ Walden has suggested that:

Despite individual instances of racial antagonism, the relative quietness of the Tasmanian experience is reflected in Tasmania's soft political stance towards the Chinese. Tasmania was the last colony to legislate against the Chinese and then the 1887 Act was exceptional in allowing free entry to Chinese women. It was also the only colony to dissent from the anti-Chinese resolutions adopted at the Inter-Colonial conference in 1888. The Tasmanian Premier, in seeking to temper the prevailing rabid racism, presented a pro-Chinese stance, arguing that the charges of disease, vice, criminality, and the threats of invasion and lowered living standards, were exaggerated and, in most cases, unsubstantiated. The Premier also stated that he considered the Chinese presence in Tasmania "as more beneficial than not to

⁵⁵ *The Northern Scene*, 14 April 1982

⁵⁶ Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.239

⁵⁷ See Map 1.

⁵⁸ Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.220

⁵⁹ See Map 1.

⁶⁰ See Map 1.

⁶¹ Rolls, E. Op Cit. pp.241-242

⁶² Walden, S, Op Cit. p.76

⁶³ Ibid, pp.76-77 For more Detailed figures see Table 2.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.76

the colony" Tasmania was also exceptional in not restricting the movement of resident Chinese to be naturalized until 1903.⁶⁵

Even in 1903 it was not the Tasmanian government that legislated against Chinese, it was the result of Commonwealth Law taking constitutional precedence over existing Tasmanian legislation.

At the inter-colonial conference on Chinese immigration in June 1888, the Tasmanian Premier, P.O. Fysh⁶⁶ said that:

Tasmania dissents from the main purpose of the draft bill because no exception is made which would enable Chinese residents to improve their social condition by the introduction of their wives; it ignores the rights of such naturalised British subjects as may be at present absent from the colonies who have children in the colonies born of British wives, and have accumulated property under the sanction of colonial laws; it makes no exception in favour of Chinese born under English rule in Hong Kong and elsewhere; it disregards the climatic characteristics of the northern territories of Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, which are a barrier to successful occupation except in pursuit of avocations peculiarly tropical and unsuitable to European labour.⁶⁷

Thus, of all the Australian colonies and states, Tasmania has a history of comparatively liberal and tolerant attitudes towards Chinese immigrants. Its circumstances have been unique and differed substantially to those of the other States in mining emphasis and in demographics.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.76

⁶⁶ Sir Phillip Oakley Fysh (1835-1919) was born near London and came to Tasmania in 1859 as a promotion in his job for a shipping firm. Won election to the Legislative Council in 1866, moved to the House of Assembly in 1873 and served as treasurer. After a break from politics for ill health, he re-entered and became Premier in 1887 until 1892. He was known for his liberalism and reformist policies. In Nairn, B. & Serle, G. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*(Volume 8) Carlton, Victoria, 1981. pp.602-603

⁶⁷ P.O. Fysh, quoted in Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.500

Chapter 2. The Chinese come to Launceston

Why Leave China? Why Come to Launceston?

There are many reasons why any people emigrate, and likewise there are many reasons why Chinese people have come to Launceston. These reasons, although ultimately unique to each immigrant, can be loosely grouped into three basic motivating factors. There are those who have emigrated in order to escape unbearable circumstances in their native country, whether that country be China or, in the cases of some, countries in South-East Asia. Other immigrants have undertaken the challenge of immigration and finding a place in a new society in order to attempt to fill aspirations of a better life for themselves or their families. This motivation can take the form of business or financial opportunities or educational opportunities for the immigrant for his or her children. Alternatively, immigration for some members of the Chinese community has been based more on personal incentives. Reunion with family is a common motive for immigration, but there are also examples of those who have come to Australia with the intention of it being a temporary visit, have fallen in love, married and stayed. Of course none of these reasons exist in isolation. Every person's situation is different and they do not necessarily fit neatly into one group. There can have been several reasons for emigration, and any combination of factors from any of these groupings is possible.

The years of war and revolution in China provided some Chinese with a desire to leave China. Lew Sing, who arrived in Launceston in 1948 at the age of twenty four, told of his experiences in China, saying:

I lived in Canton State. We were in the war. In 1937 start the war. You know, we're starving. The people all starving. I lucky, I still alive. I still lucky. Lot of people she died. All the time we go up the mountain, where they're mining, got some herbs. Some of the bark, some of the leaves, some of the roots; you know, the herbs. Come back to the town, sell them to people. Very, very hard work. You work all day, then at night you stop. You get the things; maybe you sell them, the leaves, the bark, the root, all of them herbs, you sell them and get the money to buy the pound of rice, or that sort of thing. Just a mouthful of rice.⁶⁸

In 1948 he was offered the opportunity of adoption by Launceston market gardener Lew Nem, who had broken his leg and needed someone to help with the gardens, he understandably took the opportunity, even though he had never met his adoptive father before arriving in Tasmania. The adoption was arranged by Lew Nem and Lew Sing's mother by post through clan associations.⁶⁹ He felt that life was much more bearable in Launceston with his adopted father. He compared the two situations, saying of his adopted father that "He got more house, he got more land. I got the land, I grow the rice. I can grow the rice, I can get my own tucker. When I have got the real parents,

⁶⁸ Lew Sing, Interview by Cassidy, J. in *Launceston Talks: Oral Histories of the Launceston Community*, Cassidy, J. & Wishart, E. (eds.) Regal Publications for the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, 1990, p.43 The Transcripts of this interview are unpublished and held at the Community History Branch of the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston. For ease of access the page references are to the extracts that are published in the *Launceston Talks...* collection of interviews unless otherwise specified as material that does not appear in the extracts.

⁶⁹ Lew Sing, interview by Cassidy J. (From unpublished transcripts. Material additional to that

nothing."⁷⁰ Similarly Irving Fong's childhood in China was extremely difficult. He recalled his childhood in Canton, and his experiences during the Second World War, saying that:

We can hear cannons and machine guns going on day and night. Sometimes we had to march at night time rather than during the day because the air attack of Japanese aeroplanes. This go on for, not just one or two days; it go on a whole twelve months. Often we retreat up to the jungle or up the bush or up the hill: you could see the Japanese Army roll past us on the highway.⁷¹

After these experiences there was some respite until the civil war in China between the Red Army and the Chiang Kai-shek government. At this point Irving Fong decided to leave China, going via Hong Kong and Singapore to Australia, where a distant cousin sponsored⁷² his immigration in 1949 at the age of fifteen.⁷³

In some cases certain negative aspects of the native country have not been enough, alone, to provoke immigration. However, these circumstances, combined with opportunities, educational, vocational, or in business, have provided enough motivation for moving to Australia. Charles Chan was born in Malay, what is now West Malaysia in 1942. When asked why he left in 1976 he answered "for political reasons. There is fairly strong discrimination against Chinese people in Malaya"⁷⁴. Later, however, he described how this discrimination specifically applied to racial quotas in universities, and the opportunities that his children had in Australia that would not have been open to them in Malaysia.⁷⁵ Thus educational opportunity for his family also acted as a contributing factor in Charles Chan's decision to emigrate. A similar concern motivated Tony Huang's emigration from Malaysia. He cited his reasons for emigration as being "Basically for my children's education. I got 4 children and I like them to study at universities"⁷⁶.

The same pattern emerges in an earlier generation of Chinese immigrants. One of Launceston's most prominent citizens, and the founder of Launceston's most well known Chinese family, James Chung Gon similarly emigrated in search of improved opportunity. Like so many of Australia's Chinese immigrants, particularly in the nineteenth century, James Chung Gon came to Australia in search of gold. He originally moved to Bendigo, but left as a result of racial hatred inspired acts of aggression against him and moved to Tasmania where his entrepreneurial and business acumen allowed him to establish successful market gardening and greengrocer ventures that

published in *Launceston Talks...*) p.2

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.43

⁷¹ Irving Fong, extract from Interview by Cassidy, J. Op Cit, p.37 As with Lew Sing page references are to the published extracts in *Launceston Talks...* unless otherwise stated.

⁷² Under the white Australia Policy, Irving Fong was able to come to Australia because he had the sponsorship of his cousin. The cousin paid his passage and had to provide employment for him for a specified period of time. Irving Fong was actually threatened with deportation when he decided to leave the employ of his cousin. See Irving Fong, Interview with Cassidy J. p.8 (From unpublished transcript, Material additional to that published in the *Launceston Talks...* collection of extracts.)

⁷³ Ibid, p.37

⁷⁴ Charles Chan, Interview with the author, p.1

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.3

⁷⁶ Tony Huang, Interview with the author, p.1

survive to this day.⁷⁷ He began by selling his vegetables from a cart and built his business from there, with market gardens in Mulgrave Street⁷⁸ and High Street⁷⁹ and greengrocers in Elizabeth Street⁸⁰ and Brisbane Street⁸¹. David Kuo, after coming to Australia to study dentistry, was convinced to stay by an unexpected business opportunity. He recounted the events that lead to him staying permanently, recalling how he:

Got to come back here to work, try to work one year first, because when you graduate you really don't know much. There was a surgery⁸² selling in Elphin Road. That's the surgery where I am now. And his name called Vic Satchell, Dr Satchell, and that's why he say, 'Look, David, you can have the surgery if you want it.' I thought it was too good to miss. I think, think, think about it and I say yes, I think I will take that. Because of that I stay... I was working up in Cameron Street here. And I don't know why, maybe fate or something, we keep on talking to each other and he very friendly. He say 'come and see my surgery,' and this is how it happened.⁸²

More recently, educational concerns still play a contributing role in attracting Chinese emigrants to Tasmania. Xian Wei, who immigrated to Launceston with her husband in 1996 wrote that:

We pick Tasmania mainly because in Launceston is the Australian Maritime College which caters for a wide arrange of nautical and fishery studies. My husband has a keen interest in marine biology and, to realise his aspiration, he decided to enrol into this internationally known institution to study the B.Appl.Sc. (fishery) This is why our family is now in Tasmania.⁸³

Dianna Chung is an example of a member of the Launceston Chinese community who immigrated for personal reasons. She cited her reason for leaving China as for "Reunion - with my mum and dad."⁸⁴ But this reason, itself, is also related to the idea of seeking better opportunities. Dianna was fourteen years old when she arrived in Australia in 1970, and therefore her parents' motivations for immigrating were influential. When asked why her parents, Scott and Denise Chung left China and came to Australia, she answered "To get job...because he can't get a job to feed several people. Came to Australia to get a job to feed several people."⁸⁵ Therefore, even though Dianna Chung's personal reasons for immigrating to Australia were personal, economic factors certainly contributed as well.

Personal reasons for settling in a country can extend beyond family. Lim Tiam Soon described how it was that he came from Sarawak (now East Malaysia) to settle in Australia as a result of personal reasons, telling of how he:

⁷⁷ Anne Fong, Interview by Cassidy, J (with Doris Chung Gon) Unpublished transcript held by the Community History branch of the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston

⁷⁸ A soccer field in 1998

⁷⁹ Chung Gon Crescent in 1998 following subdivision

⁸⁰ A Post Office Agency in 1998

⁸¹ Still Chung Gon Greengrocers as of 1998

⁸² David Kuo, extract from Interview by Cassidy, J, Op Cit, p.44 As with Lew Sing page references are to the published extracts in *Launceston Talks...* unless otherwise stated.

⁸³ Xian Wei in Launceston Chinese Association Newsletter (LCA), Autumn Issue, March 1996, p.8

⁸⁴ Dianna Chung, Interview with the author, p.1

⁸⁵ Ibid, p.2

actually came out to study. I study accounting studies, and so to be an accountant. Which I eventually became one. Along the way - I used to live in hostel in Camberwell, that's in Victoria - didn't come to Tassie at all - and that's where I met my wife. And, one of those things - you never know where you're going to end up, isn't it? So we married, and it's easier for me, I suppose to adopt the custom here, the language here - it's easier - harder for her have to learn Eastern culture⁸⁶, so we decided to stay here. And we came down to Tassie because her parents live here.⁸⁷

A similar situation induced Miao Miao Qu to stay in Tasmania after coming to Tasmania in 1988 to do three years medical research earning her Masters Degree. Miao Miao Qu found the situation in China difficult to endure. She recounted how:

the main reason I left Beijing is I didn't like the - I didn't like Chinese communist system. But it was - I want to find somewhere else for a long time, but there's different ways to go abroad, but one is doing research and I do the research. But not necessarily - I can live anywhere - if I were back in China now my life, you know, not so hard in China - but other people quite, a lot of people quite poor, and also the political pressure. But I just see how I go, I just go abroad and have a little taste of work, because I other country peoples, we always told China is best country in the world - so I believe - but because of the way we seen some - I read a foreign magazine⁸⁸

Her intentions were not to settle in Tasmania, but she goes on to tell how she:

found a group here, you know, Tasmania - and the professors wanted me here, so - by accident I meet my husband now. So I stay by accident - because I really like to go to America, really - because a lot - some American professor visit my hospital and knows me and my work - yeah, but, maybe financially I don't have enough money to support me there - so it's just went to Tasmania.⁸⁹

So although the reasons Miao Miao Qu had for leaving China were in order to escape adverse circumstances, her reasons for staying in Tasmania, and specifically Launceston, were personal.

Occupational Patterns of the Chinese in Launceston

Although Chinese immigrants to Launceston have had many different reasons for leaving their native countries and settling in Tasmania, the occupations they have been involved with upon arrival have followed distinct historical trends. Tasmania is unique when compared to other states in that it did not experience the great influx of Chinese immigrants as a result of the gold rushes. The few experimental attempts at Hellyer and Fingal did not produce sustained workable goldfields. The tin mining industry in the North-East of the State did to some extent produce a similar influx of Chinese miners, but certainly on a much smaller scale. As a result of this much smaller population, particularly in Launceston, fears of occupational competition did not develop as they did in New South Wales and Victoria.

⁸⁶ Mrs Lim is an English immigrant to Australia

⁸⁷ Lim Tiam Soon, Interview with the author, p.1

⁸⁸ Miao Miao Qu, Interview with the author, p.1

⁸⁹ Ibid, pp.1-2

Choi discussed the implications of the New South Wales and Victorian legislation entitled the Factories and Shops Acts of 1896, which:

defined any workshop employing one or more Chinese as a factory, and thereby, made industrial regulations concerning wages, conditions of work and limited hours, applicable to small Chinese workshops. Lyng, writing in 1927, noted the beginning of the decline of the Chinese cabinet and laundry business. By the end of World War II, the decline was complete and Chinese furniture or laundry shops were almost non-existent.⁹⁰

Tasmania did not enact similar legislation. A report to the Launceston City Council on the inspection of Chinese habitations in June 1915 included the occupations of the adult male Chinese residing in Launceston at the time. Wah Kee, Sing Lee, Sam Yick, Sue Loong, and A.L. Wee were all listed as Laundrymen. Lee Dow, and four men in residence at the premises of Sung Kwong Wing & Co, was listed as storekeepers, and W. Sing was listed as a plumber.⁹¹ These figures indicate that in these areas at this time almost one quarter of the Chinese residents of Launceston were involved in these industries.

These industries did eventually decline in Tasmania as well as the other states, but as a result of another factor. The legislation restricting Chinese immigration to Australia was being put in place, with Federal legislation taking precedence over Tasmania law, and as a result those involved in these business enterprises were growing old and either returning to China or dying. Choi pointed out that in New South Wales and Victoria "The recruitment of help in Australia was limited in view of the consistent decline and ageing of the Chinese population; and this made it difficult for the cabinet-makers and laundry-keepers to find enough workers"⁹², and the same situation developed in Tasmania.

Another area of occupation which was traditional amongst Chinese immigrants in the early half of the century was that of market gardening. Market gardening was labour-intensive, back-breaking work, and there was little competition in the area from European Australians. Choi has suggested that "Unlike cabinet-making and laundries, there was little objection to Chinese market gardeners, and their value as a major producer of vegetables was appreciated. Indeed, immigration regulations allowed assistants and substitutes to enter and work in the gardens."⁹³ In Launceston the Chinese population was heavily involved in the area. The 1891 Census of Tasmania⁹⁴ records twenty one market gardeners in Launceston out of a community numbering thirty-nine, and the 1901 Census of Tasmania⁹⁵ records thirty-three market gardeners out of a Chinese community numbering 48. L. Grey Thompson's 1915 letter to the Launceston City Council reported twenty five Chinese residents of Launceston as gardeners.⁹⁶ In addition, James Chung Gon, although living with his wife and nine (at

⁹⁰ Choi, C.Y. Op Cit. p.52

⁹¹ L. Grey Thompson, Letter to Launceston City Council, 18th June, 1915. For the addresses and further details, see copy of this letter in Appendix 3.

⁹² Choi, C.Y. Op Cit. p.52

⁹³ Ibid, p.53

⁹⁴ See Table 2.

⁹⁵ See Table 3.

⁹⁶ L. Grey Thompson, Op Cit. See Appendix 3. for details and particulars

this stage; it later became eleven) children as a fruiterer at 104 Elizabeth Street was also gardening in Mulgrave Street.⁹⁷ Well over half the Chinese in Launceston in 1891⁹⁸, 1901⁹⁹ and 1915¹⁰⁰ were occupied as gardeners.

The exceptions in immigration legislation, which applied to market gardening, allowed the trade to continue up until the end of World War II. Choi has described how they declined at this point:

with the expansion of the metropolitan areas into surrounding market-gardens many of the market-gardeners were by now rather old, reaching retirement age. Having been separated from their families for years, some sold their gardens and returned to China, while others retired to China-towns and spent their last days under the care of Chinese benevolent associations.¹⁰¹

As a general rule this trend applied to Launceston. As with every rule, however, there were exceptions. Chung Gon¹⁰², who became known around Launceston as James Chung Gon, although best known for his market gardening enterprises, survived the forced acquisition of his gardens by the local council for several reasons. Probably the most significant was the diversity of James Chung Gon's business interests. He and his family were involved in market gardening at several locations; Glen Dhu, where the current Southern Outlet now runs, the area off High Street that now has a street called "Chung Gon Crescent"¹⁰³, and the area that is now a soccer field on Mulgrave Street in South Launceston.¹⁰⁴ As well as this there were two greengrocer's shops in Elizabeth Street, and, later, in Brisbane Street, and James Chung Gon's combined enterprises with friend and sometime business associate Frank Walker staking claims in the tin-mining regions in North-Eastern Tasmania.¹⁰⁵ The fact that the entire income for the family was not tied up in a single enterprise meant that the garden in High Street was able to be moved to Relbia during the period between World Wars I and II, where it still exists today, run by Irving Fong, a cousin of the husband of James Chung Gon's daughter Anne who came to help run the gardens and the greengrocers in 1955 and then bought the gardens and the shops from James Chung Gon's invalid son Joseph.¹⁰⁶

Lew Sing's market garden was moved to Ravenswood and survived the post-war suburban expansion as a result of this move. Ravenswood was far enough away from the urban centre of Launceston to escape appropriation for suburban subdivision until much later. Although lacking sons to carry on the family business, Lew Nem adopted Lew Sing from China in 1948, and Lew Sing carried on the enterprise, even after his adoptive father returned to China in 1950.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ See Table 3.

⁹⁹ See Table 4.

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix 3.

¹⁰¹ Choi C.Y. *Op Cit.* p.53

¹⁰² Photograph of James Chung Gon Plate 1.

¹⁰³ Irving Fong, *Op Cit.* p.38

¹⁰⁴ David Barratt, Interview with the author, p.8

¹⁰⁵ Anne Fong, *Op Cit.*

¹⁰⁶ Irving Fong, *Op Cit.* p.38

¹⁰⁷ Lew Sing, *Op Cit.* p.41

The members of the Chinese community who immigrated after the end of the World War II, for the most part, originated in the area of China known as Canton. It has been noted of the emigrants of this region that "Famed as cooks, Cantonese dominate the Chinese restaurant trade in most lands."¹⁰⁸ Scott Chung arrived in Tasmania from Canton in the 1955. He came under the sponsorship of his uncle for whom he worked in Richmond as a market gardener until the expiry of his sponsorship commitments. He left the state briefly but on returning in 1961 bought the Canton Restaurant in Charles Street. He and his wife Denise Chung ran the restaurant until their Daughter Dianna Chung and her husband Noel Chung bought it¹⁰⁹ in 1986. In 1988 the restaurant was expanded, taking over the shop next door, and doubled in size, and the restaurant still operates in Charles Street Launceston today.¹¹⁰ Some of the more recent immigrants of Chinese extraction to Australia have come from Chinese families who have previously emigrated from China to South-East Asia. Because of several factors, immigrants from Malaysia and Singapore have tended to be educated professionals, rather than the labourers and miners of the late nineteenth century or the refugees escaping invasion or civil war of the early half of the twentieth century. The first reason was that "The first modifications in the White Australia Policy in 1966 were designed to assist the settlement of these two categories - the Europeanised minorities and the highly qualified."¹¹¹ The educated and English-speaking South-East Asian Chinese were accepted under immigration reforms to the White Australia policies which began to discriminate on a basis of education and qualifications, rather than language criteria. Also an important contributing factor in the development of this trend was concerned with education. Education, particularly tertiary education, drew many Malaysians to Australia. The institutionalised racial quotas at Malaysian Universities meant that many Chinese Malaysians had to seek tertiary education in other countries. Australia, being of close geographical proximity, and an English speaking nation that was undergoing a rapid expansion in the number of universities in the 1960s and 1970s, was a popular choice.¹¹² Lim Tiam Soon has described how he:

always wanted to go see somewhere. Australia is down under - it's the closest sort of - it's funny because I used to listen to Radio Australia when I was young. You know how those Kookaburra used to sort of make all those noise before the news reel. And I say, oh that be a nice place to see a little kangaroos hopping around the place. Sounds a good place, more interesting than, say, America or England. That's a bit too far away.¹¹³

Similarly, David Kuo has recounted that he:

Got into the University of Columbia in Canada. On second thoughts I think it's too far away actually. Far Too far from where we came from. We thought Australia's so close and much more desirable to come. I spent high school in Asia and I wanted to try something else. It's a challenge.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Somers Heidhues, M.F. 1974, *Southeast Asia's Chinese Minorities*, Longman Australia Pty. Ltd., Hawthorn, Victoria, pp.5-6

¹⁰⁹ Dianna's maiden and married names are both Chung

¹¹⁰ *Launceston Examiner*, 8 August 1988, pp.14-15

¹¹¹ Jupp, J. Op Cit. p.85

¹¹² Charles Chan, Op Cit. p.1

¹¹³ Lim Tiam Soon, Op Cit. p.2

¹¹⁴ David Kuo, Op Cit. p.44

As an additional factor, Charles Chan claims that:

there is quite a lot of communication between the Universities here and in Singapore, Malaysia, those - particularly Singapore - those days. This is going back - going back the 1960s, 1950s. So the professors here and some of the academic staff over there. They have fairly close association.¹¹⁵

When there are significant numbers of tertiary students studying in a country it is inevitable that some will find reasons to stay or return, and those who do then go on to use the educational qualifications that they received in Australia and work in their chosen fields. Thus one finds that Lim Tiam Soon is a Chartered Accountant¹¹⁶, Charles Chan and David Kuo are dentists, having graduated from Australian Universities¹¹⁷¹¹⁸, and Tony Huang has described his occupation by saying that he is "trained as a chemical engineer [University of New South Wales and University of Sydney]. So since I came to Australia, or Tasmania, I do many things - including working for engineering consultants, lecturing at the Australian Maritime College. Teaching, and I am also now running my own business."¹¹⁹

Problems can arise, however, with the arrival in Australia of immigrants from China who are highly qualified in a profession. The more specialised the level of training that an individual undertakes, as a general rule, the more complex and specific terms and names tend to become in that field. This can cause difficulties upon immigration to a country where the language is different. It is for this reason, above all others, that recognition of foreign accreditation can occur. Miao Miao Qu is a medical doctor with Chinese qualifications from a Chinese university. She has completed her masters degree in medical research specialising in work on skin grafting. Unfortunately her qualifications are not recognised in Australia, and she described the means by which she would have to

sit a very strict exam which is designed for being a GP - be able to practise here. I was already a specialist. I couldn't do it all over again. That mean I have to go back to medical school and do every single subject, like paediatric or gynaecology or some - psychiatry. It's too much for me - I'm too old...I've never failed an exam in my life, so I don't want - I don't want to try and - also my English not good enough to do it - I have to take the English test first. But you know, as a doctor, you have to see a lot of documents and talk to people. I don't feel confident that way. But I feel really good in the laboratory work.¹²⁰

So as a result she has had to abandon her original occupation. She said that as an occupation:

Now, I'm a housewife - nothing. But I'm self-employed as a translator. So I sit exam, ...There's a course and I join the course and I was afraid the exam - national-wide, you know, I didn't think I could pass - very strict, you, know, you've got over 70%. Yeah, but I pass, and I say Ok - and then, I often help people with translation to do it.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Charles Chan, Op Cit. p.2

¹¹⁶ Lim Tiam Soon, Op Cit. pp.1-2

¹¹⁷ Charles Chan, Op Cit. pp.1-2

¹¹⁸ David Kuo, Op Cit. p.44

¹¹⁹ Tony Huang, Op Cit. p.1

¹²⁰ Miao Miao Qu, Op Cit. pp.2-3

¹²¹ Ibid, p.2

She has had to refocus her skills, and pointed out that she was "interested in gardening too now. The grafting and the cutting plants...it is alive - they all alive - the same regulation, or the same rule."¹²²

Thus the history of the Chinese community in Launceston shows distinct movements in the occupational patterns of Chinese immigrants in Launceston. These patterns have been influenced by legislation, by the social and political context under which the members of the Chinese community in Launceston emigrated, by the available vocational opportunities, and by the acceptance of educational training and qualifications. They have also mirrored a wider pattern in Australia, where technology has replaced labour in many situations and more of the population have access to and time for tertiary education.

Launceston Chinese Association

The Launceston Chinese Association was officially formed in 1991, but it was effectively only a formalising gesture for a group within the Launceston Chinese community and which already regularly organised the main events that make up the Association's calendar. Charles Chan, the current chairman of the Association described the reasons for the inauguration of the Association, saying that it was for:

A number of reasons. To begin with there were not many more, but more Chinese residents happened to reside in Launceston, although there's not many more. And then, many of the older people who got involved in that once a year affair are more or less getting very old. It's easy for them because they have been together all these years. There's some kind of a very strong informal understanding among all these older people like Uncle Scott, Uncle Denise [Chung], and those of that age, you know. You cast your mind back say to the 1950s or 1940s, those are the kind of situation there are only a few restaurants around, and they know each other so well that they can just do things with just by oral, you know. And then later on they have to, people like us coming who are almost one generation younger - and from various parts of the world. The Chinese that came to Australia are, those here, are mainly from Hong Kong. So the background are quite similar too - but you find in the last 20 years you find Chinese coming from Hong Kong, from Mainland China, from Singapore, from Malaysia, Taiwan - so the backgrounds are very different.¹²³

The stated aims of the Association are:

To provide facilities for cultural, social and sporting functions, and to promote the study and appreciation of Chinese language and culture. To provide for the general welfare of the members. To promote friendship and understanding between members and the wider community. To provide hospitality and assistance to Chinese migrants and overseas students.¹²⁴

From sections of this statement of aims, it is easy to draw parallels between the functions of this group and the functions performed by clans and societies in nineteenth and early twentieth century Chinese communities in Australia.

¹²² Ibid, p.3

¹²³ Charles Chan, Op Cit. p.4

¹²⁴ Aims of the Launceston Chinese Association as stated in the Community Organisations Database of the Launceston General Library

The primary event organised by the Association is the All Soul's Day or Cemetery Day. This event falls on the ninth day of the ninth month of the Chinese calendar (usually in October by the European calendar), but is usually held on the nearest Sunday to the date. The event involves paying respects to ancestors by visiting the cemetery (Carr Villa is the cemetery visited by the Association) and cleaning the graves, leaving flowers, and making an offering of food.¹²⁵ The other regular event organised by the Association is the Chinese New Year celebration. This is a dinner held every year in alternating Chinese restaurants in Launceston. For example, in 1996 it was held at the Fu Wah Restaurant, in 1997 at the Canton Restaurant, and in 1998 it was held in the Wok and Grill Restaurant¹²⁶. Both of these events were being held prior to the official formation of the Association. The New Year Celebrations are very popular, and the restaurants that host them find themselves filled to capacity. The usual attendance is about one hundred and twenty people, with about one third of those being Chinese.

As well as these regular events, the Association puts on other events. In June 1996 there was a Dragon boat festival¹²⁷ at the Me Wah restaurant¹²⁸, September there was a Mid-autumn Festival held at the Country Club Casino with stalls and lantern-making sessions for children, culminating in a lantern parade.¹²⁹ In April 1997 there was a celebration for the Joss House at the museum, a fundraising venture for the restoration of the eight immortals. One hundred and fifty tickets were sold to this event.¹³⁰ In September the Mid-autumn festival was again celebrated¹³¹. In 1998 the association organised a Chinese Cultural weekend from the 25th to the 27th of September. Included in this was a visit from the Australian-Chinese Ensemble who gave three performances; one in the Brisbane Street mall, one at the Novotel Hotel incorporating a dinner, and one at the Queen Victoria museum¹³². There was also a lion dance in the mall, and a talk on Chinese emigration at the Adult Education in York Street.¹³³

These events serve a dual purpose. They help to maintain cohesion and a sense of community among the Launceston Chinese community. Even those Launceston Chinese who are not members of the Launceston Chinese Association attend events organised by them. The second purpose of events like these is to involve the wider community. The numbers attending these events are far in excess of the number of Chinese in Launceston. The Association retains a steadily fluctuating membership of approximately forty to sixty. Events with attendance of over one hundred and fifty are obviously involving non-Chinese members of the community. Ingram's proposition that favourable cross-

¹²⁵ Charles Chan, Op Cit. p.5

¹²⁶ See Plate 2.

¹²⁷ See Appendix 5. For details of the Dragon Boat festival

¹²⁸ LCA Newsletter, Winter Issue, June 1996

¹²⁹ LCA Newsletter, Spring Issue, September 1996, see also *Examiner*, 21 September 1997, p.5

¹³⁰ LCA Newsletter, Winter Issue, June 1997

¹³¹ Ibid

¹³² See Appendix 6.

¹³³ LCA Newsletter, Spring Issue, September 1998

cultural attitudes are "achieved through developing an understanding of the other culture"¹³⁴ would favour this type of event. Education is the key to understanding, and exposure is a form of education. Allowing the wider community to participate in the activities of the Chinese community educates them and leads to better understanding between cultural groups.

The Association is also involved in several other activities. It has produced a quarterly newsletter since March 1996.¹³⁵ These newsletters keep the members of the Association informed about the achievements of members, upcoming events, and also have many cultural articles; parables, explanations of Chinese traditions and poems and the like.

The Association has also been involved in the lobbying of support for the extended teaching of Mandarin in Tasmania and participated in community radio with a Chinese radio show broadcast on City Park Radio every Thursday night.¹³⁶

The Association carries on the tradition of community service that the Launceston Chinese community has been noted for since the Chinese Carnival in 1891 raised funds for the Launceston City and Suburbs Improvement Association¹³⁷ And members of the Chinese community raised money towards the purchase of the Launceston Gorge and to pay for the Launceston General Hospital.¹³⁸ In the September 1996 Newsletter mention is made of donations made to the Port Arthur Disaster Fund and the Winter Relief Fund¹³⁹

Thus the Launceston Chinese community in having it's own Association is not isolating itself from the rest of the community. It is in fact contributing to the needs of the community and trying to promote awareness and understanding between the European and Chinese sectors of the community.

¹³⁴ Ingram, D.E. 'Community Involvement: The Response of Second Language Teaching to the Challenge of the Multi-Cultural Society' in Bostock, W.W. (ed) 1977, *Towards a Multi-Cultural Tasmania: Report of a Conference June 1977*, Multi-Cultural Conference Committee, Hobart p.40

¹³⁵ This newsletter is supplied to the Launceston City Library and the University of Tasmania (Launceston) Library

¹³⁶ See Appendix 4.

¹³⁷ *Examiner*, 21 February 1891, p.2, See also: *Examiner* 5 February 1891, p2, and 18 February 1891, p.3, 21 February 1891, p.2

¹³⁸ David Barratt, Op Cit. p.8

¹³⁹ LCA Newsletter, Spring Issue, September 1996, p.2

Chapter 3. Issues concerning the Launceston Chinese Community

Religion and the Launceston Joss House

The main concern of the modern Chinese community in Launceston, as far as religion goes, centres around tradition, rather than actual religious conviction. The annual All Soul's Day event, a Buddhist tradition, is the only religious practise that is followed by the Chinese community as a group. Parallels can be drawn between this tradition and the practise of celebrating Christmas according to western traditions. Both religious events have taken the modern guise of traditions that are participated in by all, but with a meaning that is left to the individual to interpret according to his or her beliefs (or lack of).

The Joss House which is both an exhibit and an active temple at the Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston is likewise has a dual role as both a symbol of cultural tradition, and a place for religious worship. The Joss House has an interesting history. David Barratt, the temple keeper (and the only Westerner actually registered as a temple-keeper) and curator of the exhibit is familiar with its history. He explained how the temple is actually made up of at least three other Joss Houses from Weldborough, Garabaldi and Winnaleah

all that area up there is alluvial mining - and as the alluvial runs out or is unworkable, the Chinese gradually moved the temple, or their temples, up to Weldborough...And so then, by degrees Weldborough faded out and the district around it, and so the Chinese died, left, became Christian - something like that - and the last of the Chinese up there wanted to go back to China, which was the object of the exercise for all of them, though they didn't all make it. And so they came down to Launceston and spoke to James Chung Gon, of Chung Gon Green Grocery fame, and they went to see down here, a character called Alderman Hollingsworth, and arranged for the Chinese community to donate the temple to the people of Launceston, on the condition that it always remained of use by the Chinese community. And until this time, that has been so; they do in fact use it.¹⁴⁰

The *Examiner* reports the arrival of the disassembled Joss House in Launceston in 1935¹⁴¹ and notes the "Big task [that] awaits somebody at the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, where, in many pieces, is an amazing miscellany of objects, which, when pieced together, will make up the joss house interior"¹⁴². The reassembly took two years, and the exhibit opened in 1937. David Barratt explained that the exhibit that opened was "Not as it is now. Quite a bit different. It's now quite a bit closer to being a proper temple, in positioning. It's still not 100%, because...of the physical problems of the building. It's closer to being a proper temple than it was originally."¹⁴³

The temple is still in active use today. The temple is used by locals, and also by "visiting Chinese, interestingly enough, also from Communist China"¹⁴⁴ David Barratt also said that it is used by "people from Taiwan and Hong Kong, the mainland. I had two ladies here in Sydney...they've

¹⁴⁰ David Barratt, Op Cit. pp.1-2

¹⁴¹ *Examiner*, 16 August 1935, p.6

¹⁴² Ibid, p.6

¹⁴³ David Barratt, Op Cit. p.2 A full account of how the temple has changed in accordance with Chinese conventions is in the interview and accompanying diagrams.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid p.2

lived in Sydney most of their lives, they were in fact born in China...they come down here from Sydney. They're around about 70-80 years old, I guess.¹⁴⁵

There are shrines to Quon Ti, the god of fair dealing and literature and Choi Sum, one of the gods of wealth. Both are apt considering the circumstances under which they were brought to Australia. David Barratt explained that Quon Ti was an appropriate deity because:

if you were a rice-growing peasant, or a vegetable growing peasant, you were illiterate, you probably hadn't been beyond your village, suddenly you get picked up by somebody, and taken to Hong Kong, put on a ship with a bunch of people you can't even talk to, a thing you never knew - actually floating around on a thing you're never ever seen in your life before, you've come into a country you've never seen before, to do work you've never done before, for people you've never met before - you would want a lot of fair dealing.¹⁴⁶

The character of Choi Sum was originally in a shop, an appropriate place for a god of wealth, at Lebrinna until the shop closed and the figure was put into the temple.¹⁴⁷ The usage of the temple is not based upon regular attendance as occurs in Christian and many other religions. David Barratt explained that the usage of the temple was based on praying for what one wanted to the appropriate gods and then thanking them when the blessing is bestowed. Therefore actual use of the temple is sporadic. When asked how often the temple is used, David Barratt replied that it "Depends when you're talking about - sometimes not at all for a month, sometimes almost every day for a month. It just depends on who's here and what's happening."¹⁴⁸ This non-communal aspect of the religion explains to some extent the lack of influence of religion on the Launceston Chinese community. A religion that is practised individually does not have the social and communal implications of religions for which regular communal worship is a prerequisite.

The only example of the Joss House bringing the community together is through the fact that the first major project of the Launceston Chinese Association was raising funds for the restoration of items in the temple. The Lions Club and the Australia-China Friendship Society both contributed. A cocktail party was organised in conjunction with a Chinese cultural day at the museum. Over \$600 was raised that evening, and raffles, donations and other fundraising ventures raised the money needed for the restoration.¹⁴⁹

Thus in this way the temple has served both as a religious place of worship, and as a cultural and traditional symbol that has served to unite the Chinese community of Launceston in a common cause, whatever the perspective from which that cause has been viewed.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.3

¹⁴⁶ Ibid p.3

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p.4

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p.3

¹⁴⁹ LCA Newsletter, Autumn Issue, March 1996, pp.1-4. See also Figure 2.

Chinese Relationships: Clan and Family

During the gold rush era in New South Wales and Victoria there developed clan, language group and regional rivalries, extensions of divisions that existed in China. Rolls has suggested that most remarkably:

Each speech group kept rigidly apart. There was as much antagonism between different clans and races of Chinese as there developed between Europeans and Chinese.¹⁵⁰

This situation evolved into a system of secret societies such as the Khong Chew Society in Melbourne and the four District Society in Ballarat. The purpose of these organisations was to act as "meeting place, bank, court and communication system. It regulated behaviour, obligations and mining methods in a long set of rules"¹⁵¹.

Rolls has suggested that a similar system was in operation in Launceston in 1854, citing a situation in which Ah Long, a watchmaker who lived in Wellington street financially assisted thirteen passengers from the *Clarence* who had not been organised with enough money to pay their way on a connecting ship to Melbourne. Rolls has cited this situation as indicative of a secret society membership or clan obligation as a reason for Ah Long's generous assistance.¹⁵²

Clans (or lineages, as they are sometimes referred to) were a system of family groupings evolved as a means of social organisation in rural China. Choi has explained that lands owned by clans were:

rented to individual families in the lineage or outside the lineage, [which] provided income which was used as education funds for lineage schools and scholarships, for purchase of more lineage lands, for relief and charity, for loans to needy families, or for construction and repairs of ancestral halls¹⁵³

Amongst immigrants to Australia, clans took on new roles. They provided support networks and cohesion in the community. Particularly in the nineteenth century when there was persecution of the Chinese immigrants and when many of them were uneducated labourers, seeking safety in numbers was understandable. Communal knowledge and skills resulted from clan associations.

In the North-Eastern tin mining settlements clan associations were well established. Walden has suggested that "The most important buildings in the camps were the main clan stores" and has pointed out that "In 1891 there were twelve Chinese stores operating in the North-East, the most substantial being in the Chinese settlements at Moorina, Garibaldi, Ruby Flats, South Mount

¹⁵⁰ Rolls cites examples: "The small group of Manchus or Tartars speaking Mandarin were taller and fairer than the others...Justly or unjustly, no one knows which, they were regarded as thieves and murderers. The Fukienese newcomers speaking Hokkien joined the old hands on the fields and the small body of Chiu Chao kept to themselves. The Cantonese formed working parties according to their numbers. Those from the Three Districts and Four Districts usually kept apart, so did those from Zhong Shan when there were enough of them, otherwise they worked with men from nearby counties" Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.118

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p.118

¹⁵² Ibid, p.121

Cameron, Cascades, and the two clan stores...at Weldborough."¹⁵⁴ She suggests that these stores were important as "an informal meeting place for clan members; to reinforce lineage ties, for business dealings and to provide support for the clan or family in a foreign country."¹⁵⁵ Walden's research has lead to her to write that:

What can be ascertained is that clan loyalties remained strong throughout the main period of Chinese settlement [in the North-East]. In Weldborough, for example, Maa Mon chin, and various members of the Chin Clan...maintained separate stores to serve the needs of their respective clans from the late 1890s to the early 1920s. Even when the numbers of Chinese declined in the early 1900s, Tung Foo said that each store "had its own set of friends and customers"¹⁵⁶.

The Chinese immigrants to Tasmania who emigrated in the post-war period faced a completely different situation to the gold and tin miners of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Chinese miners formed self-contained communities with mining the main occupation, but a network of stores and goods and service providers. The Launceston Chinese community in the latter half of the twentieth century is much more diverse and interactive in its relationships with the wider poly-ethnic community. The members of the Chinese community have varying occupations which may or, just as easily may not, involve interaction between them. In such a diverse community with such a small membership, the question of whether these clan relationships still survive in the modern Chinese community is a complex one.

When asked whether there was any Chinese regional rivalries that have been carried over into the Launceston Chinese community, Dianna Chung , she compared it to the sort of friendly rivalry that exists between residents of different states of Australia. She said that:

The north and south Chinese are sometimes they go after each other. Why? They are same race. But you have that mainland people think that Tasmanian people is two-headed. That's not racism, you know. You think anything is something you don't like. It's not a problem. But if you take serious there's a big problem there.¹⁵⁷

Dianna Chung's immigration to Australia, however, is an example of clan relationships and their impact on Chinese immigration trends. Dianna immigrated to join her parents. Her Father, Scott Chung was able to immigrate because he was sponsored by Dianna's Uncle. Dianna said that her "tribes people they - people already been out for last 200 years."¹⁵⁸ When asked a similar question about rivalry, Charles Chan's reply was that:

yes it does exist, some rivalry, even among the emigrants, the Chinese who left China, and come over to Australia or Canada or the USA. The rivalries are quite natural in Australia because they come from different districts of the same province - say like in the province of

¹⁵³ Choi, C.Y. Op Cit. pp.10-11 Choi makes a fuller discussion of the intricacies of this complex system in pp.9-15

¹⁵⁴ Walden, S. Op Cit. p.71

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p.71

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p.72

¹⁵⁷ Dianna Chung, Op Cit. p.9

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p.3

Guandong there can be say 6 or 7 districts, and the migrants that come from speak different dialects, and you find that, say if seven or eight come to Launceston. Usually what happens is that the pioneers who come from one district, and this same few seven or eight pioneers, they will sponsor from their own district another 20 or 30 come to Launceston. You will find eventually, in certain groups, certain localities all over the world they speak a particular dialect see, and then they form their own association, just like we have a Chinese Association, but of course here we do not, because we are so few.¹⁵⁹

He noted the association between occupations and clan groups amongst Chinese emigrants, citing rubber growing, tin mining and the restaurant trade as examples of occupational areas in which certain regional or clan groups dominate amongst emigrants. He did concede that the situation "perhaps valid up to the 1960s and 1950s. Lately and as time goes by, this clan, this clannish behaviour I think has broken down a fair bit. So from the 1960s onwards, you find that even in Melbourne, even in Malaysia the clans are on the decline."¹⁶⁰ He suggested the widespread usage of Mandarin as a national language, higher education levels, and the functions of the clan groups being increasingly handled by government organisations such as Migrant Resource Centres, as being factors in this decline.¹⁶¹

The language factor appears to be very important in distinguishing different groups of Chinese even in immigrant communities. Lim Tiam Soon has said that:

mostly Chinese over here, they tend to speak Cantonese. I don't speak Cantonese...If you don't have that language you don't feel a sense of belonging, so in a sense I feel more belonging to the locality here...if you deal with the Hong Kong Chinese. It's just the way things are. People behave - that's the way their groupings are. Think in terms of a lot of restaurants in town. Most of them are from Hong Kong. And they speak Cantonese and they tend to group together. So even though I am Chinese I don't speak their language. You know, I might as well be a foreigner to them.¹⁶²

Miao Miao Qu has noticed similar difficulties in overcoming the language barrier within the Launceston Chinese community. She has said that:

it's funny Association in Launceston. Not many Chinese here, and in the small number of Chinese there's separate group as well because it's older Chinese migrants here they all speak Cantonese, and the new people, newcomers all speak Mandarin. So we get on very well...now, you know, we can talk to each other in English, and also in Mandarin...some of them speak little bit Mandarin. A shame we couldn't speak Cantonese language. It's very hard to learn. Because I've got a burden to learn English already, so...whenever people come from mainland I will talk to them a lot. I go to see Denise [Chung] a lot. We are all good friends. It's quite good¹⁶³

Thus, although clans and secret societies do not exist in the institutionalised form that they used to take in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they still remain influential. Regional and language groups no longer congregate in certain occupations, and some of the functions of clan and language groups have been increasingly handled by government organisations. Instead, in

¹⁵⁹ Charles Chan, Op Cit. pp.7-8

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p.8

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.8

¹⁶² Lim Tiam Soon, Op Cit. p.5

Launceston, of far more importance is the Launceston Chinese Association which has no restrictions as to membership based on clan, regional, or even racial criteria.

* * *

Closely related to the influence of clans on Chinese immigration to Australia is the concept of family. Chinese immigrants have been noted, in all countries where they have immigrated to in large numbers, for two things, both of which are the result of a different system of family.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the Chinese migrant population, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was the massive gender imbalance. The first Chinese female in Australia did not arrive until 1875¹⁶⁴. In Tasmania, censuses report a total of two Chinese women (out of 844 Chinese residents) in 1881, eight Chinese women (out of 939 Chinese residents) in 1891 and twenty-four Chinese women (out of 506 Chinese residents) in 1901.¹⁶⁵ The reason for this imbalance lies in Chinese family structure. For property and clan reasons, there was a need to maintain strong lineage, particularly through the sons of the family. Choi has explained the implications of this, writing that:

When there was comparatively little objection to males emigrating to foreign countries, especially when migration was only temporary, there was strong objection regarding females, for fear that the whole family would be lost. Hence the small number of Chinese females migrating with men in the early periods.¹⁶⁶

This same cultural emphasis on maintaining strong lineage therefore also explains the transient nature of early Chinese in Australia. The expectation was that the emigrants were to travel, earn their fortune, and then return to China to continue strengthening the lineage.

What sometimes happened was that, finding no easily obtained quick fortune, "Chinese on-the-road to the colonies left their wives, children and parents behind...[and] became commuters, returning home every few years to re-establish links with their family."¹⁶⁷ Although the aspiration of ultimately returning to China to live has declined since the 1960s, some of this tradition still remains. Without exception, every interviewee encountered in the researching of this topic had returned to their native land (either China or countries in South-East Asia) with the specific aim of visiting family on at least two occasions. Thus, a new trend has emerged, replacing the old. A system of homage and respect paid by visits to relatives, particularly older relatives before they die has emerged to replace the obligation to return to China permanently. The small numbers of females were the result of Chinese convention, rather than exclusion by Australia.

This situation changed significantly with changes in China's politics. The Land Reform of 1950-1953 eliminated the large landholdings that were the basis of the clan system in China, and also

¹⁶³ Miao Miao Qu, *Op Cit.* p.6

¹⁶⁴ Rolls, E. *Op Cit.* p.201

¹⁶⁵ Choi, C.Y. *Op Cit.* p.22 See Table 1. for these figures. Table 3. also shows similar ratios.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p.13

¹⁶⁷ Kathryn Cronin, quoted in Walden, S. *Op Cit.* p.72

confiscated land belonging to Chinese expatriates.¹⁶⁸ The reasons for Chinese to return to China were being undermined and many Chinese thus settled permanently outside of China, bringing their families to join them.

Education

Education is an important part of any community, and the Launceston Chinese community is no exception. Education has influenced the Launceston Chinese community in a number of ways. It has been a motivating factor for some members of the community for immigration. Conversely, the education system here has had to learn to adapt to the problems posed by a poly-ethnic community, and education has undergone a number of changes in order to incorporate the educational needs and expectations of immigrants and their families. The problems associated with educating migrants and the children of migrants pose unique problems for educators and for immigrants trying to bring about reform to have their needs met. Learning English is an educational concern that affects any migrants from non-English speaking countries settling in Australia, and the conceptual and structural differences between English and Chinese languages further compounds this concern for the Launceston Chinese community. Through acceptance of the needs of migrant communities, which is a result of the growing size of the Chinese community, there have been improvements in the effectiveness of educational services. The older immigrants tell stories of arriving in Australia without any English skills whatsoever. There were some options for minimal tuition, such as evening classes. Irving Fong recounts that:

At night time ride a bicycle to the Technical College to learn English twice a week. I could manage to say a few words, because you worked all day and no tuition, and progress very, very slow. I do a lot of reading so my teacher so my teacher would probably be the English/Chinese dictionary.¹⁶⁹

A similar situation is recounted by Lew Sing, who described how in the 1950s:

Alec Gee old man, he lived at High Street. He get me the book, he tell me to go to school. Seven o'clock to nine o'clock at night. I go the one night. I get the book. They teach the trolley. You know, draw on the blackboard; this be wheel, this be handle. I couldn't understand what the teacher be talking about! I said, no. I won't go any more. I couldn't understand, I couldn't go to school. Couldn't understand when I read the book. Really hard. I just work on it myself. That time I young. I come here, I meet you people, I pick myself up, that's all.¹⁷⁰

Lew Sing's experiences highlight the inadequacy of these types of educational ventures. This type of English as a Second language course did not take into consideration the differing educational needs of different migrants and different language groups. The very existence of a course, however, does indicate changing attitudes to Chinese immigrants. Classes to teach English to migrants were part of a growing sensitivity to their needs. Previously the inability to speak the language of the host country was viewed as a flaw on the part of the migrant, for which he or she was responsible.

¹⁶⁸ Choi, C.Y. Op Cit. p.57

¹⁶⁹ Irving Fong, Op Cit. p.38

¹⁷⁰ Lew Sing, Op Cit. p.43

The Chinese languages are vastly different in structure and concept to European languages, and to successfully teach English to Chinese immigrants these differences need to be recognised and accounted for by somebody trained in the area. Members of the Chinese community in Australia who have emigrated via Malaysia have had the relative advantage, in this area, of the fact that Malaysia, or at least some of its original constituents, were English colonies at one point. As such English is an official language and children educated in Malaysia are taught English.

Newer immigrants from China have also had similar benefits from the historical movement of English towards becoming the international standard language of business and trade. As a result of this, English is being taught to children in many countries where it is not a native tongue, and China is no exception. Miao Miao Qu, a recent immigrant from Mainland China recalled that “I started [learning English] from Uni, but now people start from primary school”¹⁷¹ and agreed that the teaching of English in China is now widespread.¹⁷²

Educating the children of immigrants in Australia poses unique problems. In the post-war era, Chinese immigrants have for the great majority been skilled workers with skills and education. They have had the ability and self-discipline required for learning another language on top of the skills they have already acquired. For children the situation is different. Children in general are faced with challenges enough in the established education system, without the added burdens of language and cultural difficulties. Miao Miao Qu told of concern for her daughter’s ability to cope with a university education saying that “it’s hard so I don’t believe she can do it. Because it so hard itself and came here when she was 13, so she still got a little bit English, you know, writing problem and stuff”, illustrating the problems that can arise with educating trans-cultural children.

A primary concern when educating the children of immigrants is that fact that immigrants can feel like “Australian schools present the Australian way of life as the only valid one, and...this creates conflict between the immigrant parents and children.”¹⁷³ A Multi-Cultural Conference held in June 1977 suggested a number of solutions to rectify this sort of problem, including the introduction of ethnic representation on educational bodies, the practise of home visits to immigrant parents of students, the encouragement of immigrant (or other) parent usage of school facilities such as libraries, and the provision of alternative text-books in first languages for bilingual children.¹⁷⁴ Many of these have been implemented to different extents in schools in Tasmania.

Another consideration when educating the children of migrants is the high standard of educational expectations that are placed upon children by migrant parents. Particularly amongst Chinese immigrants, there is a marked difference in the strictness, discipline and educational expectations between Chinese and Australian cultures. Chinese education, in comparison to Australian education is stricter, with more emphasis on academic areas and less on extra-curricular

¹⁷¹ Miao Miao Qu, Op Cit. p.4

¹⁷² Ibid, p.4

¹⁷³ Lloyd, E. 'Cultural Integration and Understanding in the Primary School' in Bostock, W.W. (ed) 1977, *Towards a Multi-Cultural Tasmania: Report of a Conference June 1977*, Multi-Cultural Conference Committee, Hobart, p.103

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

activities and flexibility. Dianna Chung was educated in China and then in Australia when she emigrated and she now has children in the Tasmanian education system at primary school, college and university levels. Her opinion was that “education in China is more strict. They have a lot more work for your age, but in here you don't.”¹⁷⁵ Charles Chan, a Malaysian of Chinese extraction found a similar situation. He stated that:

when we first came, we do feel that there is no homework. I can't believe it when I come over here and you find all the young kids when they come home from school every night you spend about an hour or so with the text book and exercise book and they do sums they write an essay, whatever, and they have something to do in every evening and then next morning they can bring it for the teacher for marking. So here we don't have that anyway when I came.¹⁷⁶

Because of this dissatisfaction with the education system due to cultural differences, Charles Chan did what many immigrant parents have done and endeavoured to fill the apparent gaps in education for his children himself and set work for them to do in the home. Educational philosophy is a subject under constant debate and revision, and nobody has ever claimed to know what the ideal educational system is, least of all Charles Chan. Criticism of this type of extra education by parents has tended to claim that it is overburdening the children. Charles Chan discussed this argument, saying that:

I don't know whether you overburden them or not, because sometimes the philosophy here is that they should be given lots of other time to do other things. But, I mean, one can also look at the point of view of stressing them too much. You know. They go to school and study and then when come back here you give them more work. Whether that is wrong...whether initially the concept is correct or not I don't know, but that is what I did, you know, because of how I was brought up. So was what I was used to.¹⁷⁷

Miao Miao Qu described a similar situation with her daughter, saying that:

when she go school in St Pat's I was very strict to her. Bit dominant. I don't know this word before I get here. I think is normal. I got one child, you know. I want she grow up in a good way, not in a bad way, no drugs, none of that, of course, but of course she got work hard on what she want to do, you know.¹⁷⁸

Added to these cultural differences in philosophy is often the problem of the high expectations that immigrant parents have for their children that they will better their social and economic standing. Usually immigration is an action in pursuit of a better lifestyle for the immigrant and his or her family. This tends to incorporate the idea of improving the financial situation of the immigrant and family from what it was or would have been in the native country. In an Australian meritocratic system hard work and education are the means to this end. The pursuit of a better education for one's children has proved a powerful motivating factor for immigration in itself. When asked why he moved from Malaysia to Australia, Tony Huang (a chemical engineering graduate

¹⁷⁵ Dianna Chung, Op Cit. p.2

¹⁷⁶ Charles Chan, Op Cit. p.9

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p.9

¹⁷⁸ Miao Miao Qu, Op Cit. p.8

whose wife is a nursing graduate and daughter is a pharmacy graduate) replied that it was “Basically, for my children's education. I got 4 children and I like them to study at universities”¹⁷⁹

Tony Huang's aspiration for his children to have a university education is far from unique amongst immigrant parents in Launceston. It appears an extremely common phenomenon¹⁸⁰ for Chinese immigrant parents in Australia to wish their children prestigious and prosperous occupations, resulting from hard work and higher education. The Launceston Chinese Association newsletter attests to this attitude. The June 1998 issue includes best wishes to “Martin Chung who is now employed as a network engineer by the State Library of New South Wales. He was the computing technical support officer for the information technology section of the Faculty of Commerce and Law, University of Tasmania. Martin Graduated from the University of Tasmania Bachelor of Science and Graduate Diploma Applied Computing”¹⁸¹. In the June 1997 issue there was congratulations to “Mr Chung Yu-Xian (Nigel) [who] was admitted to first year University of Tasmania (Launceston Campus), faculty of Applied computing”¹⁸², to “Miss Amy Cutler...[who] was admitted to the Faculty of Music, Griffith University, Qld”¹⁸³, to “Mr Chan Chee-Kwong...[who] was awarded the prestigious Mount Nelson Award, University of Tasmania”¹⁸⁴, to “Miss Fam Li-Shan (Elisa)...[who] graduated with Bachelor of Commerce, University of Tasmania...[and] is now working at Davern Dixon Chartered Accountants”¹⁸⁵, and to “Dr Chan Yean Hua (Eva)...[who] graduated with Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, University of Tasmania...[and] is now doing her internship at the Launceston General Hospital”¹⁸⁶. The March 1998 issue includes similar congratulations to “Mr Marcus Mok Tuck...who graduated in Bachelor of Aerospace Engineering with honours in 1997 from the University of NSW. He is now employed in Sydney in the field of wind tunnel technology”¹⁸⁷. The March 1996 newsletter congratulates Chan Chee-Kwon, Steven Fam Wen-Ho, Anna Lee Yuen-Kwan and Chenqu Zhao (Mimi) on completing their Tasmanian Certificates of Education and being accepted into various University courses.

As much as education is important for immigrants and their families in allowing them to be successful and functional members of their adopted country, there is no reason why the onus should be all on the immigrant. Particularly in light of Australia's geographical proximity to the Asian nations and its multi-cultural composition, Australians have much to gain by actively seeking an understanding of Asian culture. As a general proposition, educators have suggested that “The challenge for Tasmania...is to ensure Tasmanian children have an overall knowledge and realisation that as Australians they are part of a multi-cultural, poly-ethnic community.”¹⁸⁸ This sort of attitude is

¹⁷⁹ Tony Huang, Op Cit. p.1

¹⁸⁰ Based on the interviews with current members of the Launceston Chinese community

¹⁸¹ LCA Newsletter, Winter Issue, June 1998, p.2

¹⁸² LCA Newsletter, Winter Issue, June 1997, p.2

¹⁸³ Ibid, p.2

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p.2

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p.2

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p.2

¹⁸⁷ LCA Newsletter, Autumn Issue, March 1998, p.4

¹⁸⁸ Grassby, A.J. 'Australia's Cultural Revolution' in Bostock, W.W. (ed) Op Cit. p.26

essential to immigrant communities, such as the Launceston Chinese community being able to make a valuable contribution to the diversity general society through its unique perspectives, skills, and cultural attitudes. Ingram points out that “The development of favourable cross-cultural attitudes is a major goal in the multi-cultural society. It is achieved through developing an understanding of the other culture, through the “conscientization” process, and through interaction”¹⁸⁹

While cross-cultural interaction is very important in the achievement of these goals, another course of action has also been considered of equal importance. Grassby, a former Labour minister for immigration, has stated that:

To enrich our children, to better equip them as Australians in a multi-cultural society and to enable them to be more effective citizens of the global village which is the world of today and tomorrow every child on Day 1 of Year 1 should have a chance to acquire a second language and a broader culture.¹⁹⁰

This attitude is one that is shared by the Launceston Chinese Association, and it has been a concern of the Association to endeavour to organise and promote classes in Mandarin, and also to lobby for the teaching of Mandarin in Tasmanian schools. This active involvement of the Association is essential because, as Kruup has pointed out that “In principle all languages should be promoted. In practical terms, success is only possible where ethnic groups themselves strongly support the teaching of their languages. Some government support is essential, particularly with training of teachers.”¹⁹¹ Charles Chan described the process by which Mandarin is currently being taught in Launceston and the associated problems and shortcomings when he said that:

we have every Thursday a half hour program broadcast in Mandarin, and we also back up say with the telephone with tutors if you want to. And there are classes established on Tuesday evenings, and starting from next term, next school term onwards, on Sunday afternoons. We feel that for those who want to learn Mandarin over the radio, unless the person is very, very, very motivate, you know, it is going to be, I won't say impossible, but a very difficult task, you know. So with that we know that if they need backing they should enrol in a class, or if they have their own resources at home, or close friends, because, I mean, how much can you learn on the radio? And it's so fleeting, you know. I have got tapes here, I've got tapes here I can lend to people who are interested. I've got video tapes, I've got audio tapes, if they ring me up, me or another lady, then can tell them over the phone how to pronounce a word, or some meaning of a word. So to that extent we try and backup the radio program. It's not ideal, in fact, it is the least ideal of all the ways to teach a language, you know, but it is something we offer if anybody is...just to stimulate an interest, you know. It is very difficult to learn anything over the radio.¹⁹²

After all, in light of the geographical proximity and ever increasing trade relations of Australia with China, the introduction of Chinese languages would seem to make sense, as would the phasing out of European languages as our trade and economic relationships with European nations similarly declines. Charles Chan described how:

¹⁸⁹ Ingram, D.E. Op Cit. p.40

¹⁹⁰ Grassby, A.J. Op Cit. p.27

¹⁹¹ Kruup, K. 'Discussion Paper' in Bostock, W.W. (ed), Op Cit, p.100

¹⁹² Charles Chan, Op Cit. p.6 The debate over having Mandarin introduced as a second language subject in Tasmanian schools is discussed in Appendix 4.

In the last 10, 15 years, there are a lot of migrants like me who come in as professional people: Doctors, Dentists, Accountants, finance people, investment people... So you find that there are a lot of Asians who are in other professions. So sometimes you find that the hospitals or the city council, they need interpreters. So like the business trip of Fujiene or Shiantze coming here, then they do not have to have people here to translate and interpret, then they get a letter to us they say that they can't provide the resources, so in the last couple of years I have been involved in, these confusions have increased. And that does not reflect very well on the education system of Tasmania, they should be studying to teach the students the languages for the future, you know. This might be a big problem in terms of communicating with other people coming here.¹⁹³

The importance economic relationship between China and Australia, although often presented as a modern discovery or realisation, is actually something that has been known throughout Australia's colonial history. Rolls wrote that:

Until the 1840s Australia had regarded trade and its consequent social contact with China, India and South-East Asia as a normal thing. Those countries were more reachable than Britain; they were our nearest neighbours. Every employer, especially landowners and shipping companies, considered those countries first for their labour¹⁹⁴

And in the 1930s Sleeman was claiming the idea as a new one, writing that "Australia must seek its markets in the East, and China is the most potentially great of the markets of the world"¹⁹⁵ These continued resurgences of realisation about the importance of the economic relationship between China and Australia serve as another reason why education in Chinese language and culture should be made a higher priority.

¹⁹³ Ibid, pp.5-6

¹⁹⁴ Rolls, E. Op Cit. p.456

¹⁹⁵ Sleeman, J.H.C. Op Cit. p.30

Chapter 4. Cultural Cohesion vs. Assimilation

"The Middle People": Assimilation, Cultural Pluralism and Cultural Synthesis

Changing society and circumstances have brought about the shifting of perspectives on a range of issues concerning Chinese immigrants to Australia. Similarly there have also been changes in attitudes as to what social obligations were expected of those immigrants once they arrived. Traditionally European thinking on this point was based upon the concept of assimilation. In more recent thinking, this idea has been replaced by more tolerant philosophies, based on the concept of cultural pluralism. The attitudes of the immigrants themselves, however, have not been included as a consideration in either of these philosophical positions. A combination of assimilation in some areas, cultural pluralism in others, and a synthesis of cultures seems to have been the rule in the Launceston Chinese community, with the applicable areas and extent of each determined by each individual, rather than a strict adherence to any one method of reconciling the immigrant experience.

In order for an immigrant to be able to function in a new society, certain social norms and standards have to be adhered to for practical reasons. Jupp has suggested that the basic expectations of immigrants should be that they

learn the language of the host society, comply with and understand its laws, pay its taxes and abandon or modify practises which are illegal or socially unacceptable. It is also highly desirable that immigrants should find suitable work and housing and be able to form a family should they wish to.¹⁹⁶

To this extent a certain degree of assimilation is necessary to ensure that the immigrant can successfully become a functioning and interactive member of the new community. In this context the usefulness of assimilation can be clearly seen. The problem with social expectations of immigrant assimilation has arisen in areas that are not necessary to the basic functioning of the individual in society. When immigrants were expected to assimilate to European Australian standards in areas such as public usage of native languages, and the abandoning of national dress, gestures, food, drinks, habits and customs of the native land this pressure to conform starts to become an infringement upon the rights of the individual. It amounts to an expectation of conformity to the simple purpose of sparing the delicate sensibilities of the European Australian who might experience discomfort at being confronted by an alternative world view or course of action. The policy of encouraging, even expecting, assimilation from the large numbers of immigrants who arrived in Australia in the post-World War II era displays the high degree of cultural arrogance that lay at the core of British colonial nationalism.

By 1977, a speech by the Tasmanian Premier illustrated changing attitudes. Mr Neilson said that "Whilst undoubtedly assimilation has been necessary, we are now wise enough to know that it is possible for people to be assimilated into our society without them losing their own natural culture."¹⁹⁷ The idea of maintaining the values and traditions of native culture, whilst simultaneously upholding

¹⁹⁶ Jupp, Op Cit. p.98

the values and traditions of the new society is a vision of cultural pluralism. Unfortunately, this utopian ideal of two cultures coexisting, and the reconciliation of two sets of value systems is difficult at best, and well nigh impossible when dealing with value systems as diametrically different as those of Asia and Europe. An individual can only respond in one way to any given situation. To say that a person holds two sets of conflicting ideals is impossible. They must apply either one or the other and act according to that decision.

Thus the immigrant actually reconciles conflicting values through a synthesis of culture, not a cultural pluralism. Noel Chung spoke of his feeling that the Chinese community has "quite a broad spectrum. We can actually understand both cultures quite easily, and we understand the problems that might be associated between two extreme cultures. In fact, in Tassie we have almost become like middle people."¹⁹⁸ Dianna Chung explains how given any situation where there are conflicts in how each value system deems it should be handled, she "can't say that [she is] going to do it the Australian way or a Chinese way."¹⁹⁹ She gives the example that:

If I take my mum and dad out for dinner I would never make my mum and dad pay for the dinner. And that is a thing that will never happen to an Asian country people. But I understand Australian, because that is their culture that their mum and dad have to pay their own share even they brought the children up, whatever - even though they have got the pension, they still be expected pay their own way. I understand that. But it doesn't mean that I like to do the way they do. I think it's wrong. So I can't say "Oh I am going to do the Chinese way" or any other way. To me it's wrong. And the other way would be not.²⁰⁰

Her husband clarified this point, saying that "it's not about being right or wrong. In each culture I think it's what we feel comfortable in doing"²⁰¹. Tony Huang expressed similar sentiments, saying that he considers himself to be "picking up the best of the two cultures".²⁰²

One influential factor in this synthesis of cultures has been the dissemination of the Chinese community in Launceston amongst the wider community. The Launceston Chinese community makes up a very small percentage of the population. The Launceston Chinese Association has a membership of only approximately 40-55²⁰³. Even if they wanted to, the Chinese community could not keep itself isolated from the wider community, but it does not make any effort to do so. The community is disseminated amongst the wider Launceston community in two ways. Unlike in the days of the tin mines in Tasmania where the majority of the Chinese population was gathered in enclaves, the members of the Chinese community today live in the suburbs like the majority of urban dwelling Australians.²⁰⁴ There is not the cultural isolation that is brought about by Chinese immigrant

¹⁹⁷ Neilson, W.A. quoted in Bostock, W.W. Op Cit. p.12

¹⁹⁸ Noel Chung, from Dianna Chung, Interview with the author, p.7

¹⁹⁹ Dianna Chung, Op Cit. p.8

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p.8

²⁰¹ Noel Chung Op Cit. p.8

²⁰² Tony Huang, Op Cit. p.4

²⁰³ The numbers are not specific because of constant changes due to the membership of Chinese living temporarily in Tasmania for study or work.

²⁰⁴ Charles Chan and Noel and Dianna Chung live in Riverside, Lim Tiam Soon and Miao Miao Qu live in Trevallyn, and Tony Huang also lives in Riverside.

communities who live in "China Towns" such as exist in the larger cities of the United States.²⁰⁵ Also contributing to the development of this synthesised culture is the social interaction between members of the Chinese community and members of the wider community in Launceston. This also is due in part to the small number of Chinese immigrants actually residing in Launceston. Tony Huang explained about having friends within the Launceston Chinese community that "there are not that many Chinese in Launceston. We tend to get to know one another very quickly. I also have many friends who are not of Chinese origin. I firmly believe in community intermixing and NOT community isolation."²⁰⁶

The cultural synthesis is not only a process that occurs in immigrant communities. Simply by being there and sharing their culture and contributing to the wider community, the Launceston Chinese community has also influenced the host society. Launceston supports seven Chinese restaurants²⁰⁷ and its events can attract upwards of 120 people, of which sometimes only about one third are Chinese. There is indeed cohesiveness to Launceston's Chinese community. The Launceston Chinese Association is institutionalised proof of that fact and James Chung Gon and his legacy are icons of Launceston's history, and the community involvement of the Chinese community survives in the physical contributions of the Launceston gorge and the Launceston General Hospital. This, however, is not proof of cultural pluralism. The members of the Launceston Chinese community, however much time they spend together, however much they organise Chinese cultural activities, are different to Chinese people in China in their values and lifestyles. This is the inevitable outcome of living in a different society. New values are required in order to survive new situations. The communal activities of the Chinese community in Launceston are generally aimed at promoting interaction and understanding between the Chinese community and the rest of Launceston. Festivals and events are open to the general public and funds are raised for community projects and charities.

The result of this mutual cultural synthesis in which Asian and European cultures have been combined, the differences reconciled, and a new cultural world view synthesis, like a product of Gestalt's principles where the resulting culture is greater than, and unique from, either of the original cultures is that both cultures are enriched by the combination. Hopefully this synthesis of cultures will continue, in a realisation of Batt's vision of "a concept of the future in which ethnic communities are joined in the process of sharing culture and not keeping culture to themselves...in which we work on the principle that sharing culture is better than imposing it."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Huck, A. 'Chinese in Australia' in Racism: the Australian Experience. A Study of Race Prejudice in Australia. (Volume 1: Prejudice and Xenophobia) by F. S. Stevens, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney. 1971, p.108

²⁰⁶ Tony Huang, Op Cit. p.3 amendments by Tony Huang

²⁰⁷ The Canton, The City Pearl Chinese Restaurant, the Golden Sea Dragon, Hoong Fatt Restaurant, Fu Wah Chinese Restaurant, Me Wah Restaurant, and the Wok and Grill

²⁰⁸ Batt, N.L.C. 'Towards a Multi-Cultural Tasmania' in Bostock, W.W. (ed) 1977, *Towards a Multi-Cultural Tasmania: Report of a Conference June 1977*, Multi-Cultural Conference Committee, Hobart, pp.72-73

Plate 1.

James Chung Gon.

Source: Private Photograph given to David Walker (son of Frank Walker) by Anne Chung Gon in 1996



Plate 2.

Chinese New Year 1998. Chee-Fai Chang, Charles Chan, David Lam, Ken Chan (l-r)
Source: *Examiner*, 28 January 1998



Appendix 1.

China: A nation in turmoil

In order to understand the motivations of Chinese emigrants to Tasmania, a basic understanding of the major events of the last 160 years of China's history is necessary. Although the history of China and Chinese civilisation is long and complex, for purposes of this study, it is only necessary to discuss the severe social and political problems that occurred in China beginning in the 1830s. There was over-population²⁰⁹ and the subsequent inadequate land and rural production problems in Southern China. There was internal conflict with the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64) and the bandits and gangs who took advantage of the social disorder. The Opium War (1839-1842) forced China to allow trading rights, first to Britain, and over the following two decades to other European Nations, in the ports of Amoy, Canton, Foochow, Ningpo and Canton. Hong Kong was also ceded to British rule. Ryan has described how:

The people of south-east China, dislocated by war and rebellion and impoverished by drought and famine, began emigrating in large numbers to unknown and unfamiliar overseas destinations, enticed by the prospect of instant wealth in the form of gold, or high wages for labour contracts.²¹⁰

This was followed by pressure from European ruled colonies in South-East Asia and Australia in the 1830s and 1840s for the Ching government to end its prohibitions on emigration, but "Official recognition of the right to emigrate was finally procured when Western demands of Chinese labour were heightened by the rapid development of colonies."²¹¹ In 1859, the government allowed voluntary emigration, and in 1860 the Peking Convention legalised the active recruitment of labour from the treaty ports opened after the Opium War.²¹² Under these circumstances, the option of emigration must have seemed appealing. The gold rushes in California in 1849 and Australia in 1851 inspired hope in thousands of Chinese that they could go earn their fortunes in another lands, escaping the civil and international strife that had caused great poverty, and return wealthy.

The Republican Revolution of 1911, replaced the Ching emperor with the Kuomintang nationalist government. Then from 1937-1945 Japan took advantage of China's military and political weaknesses, occupying areas of Southern China.²¹³ Finally In 1949 the communist People's Republic of China was founded, after a civil war between the Nationalist Government and the communists that lasted three years. There was persecution and gaoling of anyone who was considered dissident. Much of the western world refused to recognise the communist government and the United States refused diplomatic and trade relations with China because of its alliance with the Soviet Union.²¹⁴ Land reform added to the poverty through the unsuccessful attempts at redistributing wealth under communal principals, and "several hundred thousand [were] executed after struggle meetings"²¹⁵. In 1966-8 and 1968-76 two Cultural revolutions threw the country into further political upheaval.

²⁰⁹ In 1834 the population of China was already over 400 million. In *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Volume 16: *Macropaedia*) 15th Edition, Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. Chicago

²¹⁰ Ryan, J. 1995, *Ancestors: Chinese in Colonial Australia*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, p.15

²¹¹ Choi, C.Y. Op Cit. p.15

²¹² Ibid, p.15

²¹³ Gittings, J. 1990, *China Changes Face: The Road from Revolution 1949-1989*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p.x

²¹⁴ Ibid, p.x

²¹⁵ Ibid, p.x

Appendix 2.

Legislation Restricting Chinese Immigration

Victoria passed an Act to make provisions for Certain Immigrants in 1855, imposing a poll tax of £10 for each immigrant, and restricting immigration numbers of Chinese to ten allowed per tonnage of goods imported.²¹⁶ South Australia followed suite in 1857, and New South Wales in 1861. The combination of this harassment and the immigration legislation brought about a decline in Chinese immigration, sufficient that all three of these Acts were repealed between 1861 and 1867. However these were later reintroduced in 1881, when the first of two inter-colonial conferences was held to try to regulate Chinese immigration in all colonies.²¹⁷ Tasmania introduced similar legislation in 1887, with a £10 poll tax and tonnage restrictions of one Chinese per one hundred tons of imports.²¹⁸

1888 saw the second inter-colonial conference on immigration, and as a result of this the poll tax was abolished, but tonnage restrictions were raised to one Chinese for every 500 tons of imports.²¹⁹ the resurgence of legislation was justified by periodic outbreaks of smallpox and leprosy in all colonies, which were conveniently, although not always correctly, blamed on the arriving Chinese immigrants.²²⁰ Rolls wrote that during this era "However many Chinese there were, all the colonies agreed that there were too many. When it broke out, smallpox became a convenient political tool. It allowed injustice to be disguised as justice."²²¹

²¹⁶ Choi, C.Y. Op Cit. p.20

²¹⁷ Ibid, pp.21-26

²¹⁸ Ibid, p.26

²¹⁹ Ibid, p.26

²²⁰ See: Rolls, E. Op Cit. Chapter 5: 'Breaking Out In Heavenly Flowers'

²²¹ Ibid, p.298

Appendix 3.

The Secretary of the LOCAL AUTHORITY

LAUNCESTON

Dear Sir,

18th June, 1915

I beg to report respecting the Chinese habitations.

Throughout Australia these aliens occupy premises in which a European would not dwell. There are only forty (40) chinamen in Launceston, and the gardeners live in very poor dwellings. The Inspector accompanied me when examining the various places.

Ah Gee, 244 York Street - gardener - dilapidated four-roomed weather-board cottage. Three bedrooms, floors on the ground. One resident.

W. Sing, 109 Elizabeth Street, plumber. Modern terraced house, brick party walls, wooden facings.

Wah Kee, 122 Elizabeth Street, laundryman. Wooden skillion in front, brick building at rear; three rooms on ground floor and two rooms on the first - a dilapidated old building.

Chung Gong, 104 Elizabeth St., fruiterer. Modern terrace, two rooms on ground and four on first. Family of ten.

Lee Dow, 139 St. John Street, storekeeper. Three ordinary and store rooms on ground and four on first floor. Occupied by family comprising wife and three children. Modern building.

Ah Caw, 135 St John Street. Old brick buildings. In south wing three men live and in north wing there are three rooms on ground and four on first floor - wife and seven children occupy this wing.

Sing Lee, 123 St John Street. Old brick building - laundry business conducted on premises. Two rooms on ground floor and four on first floor, One resident. Modern building.

Jim Ah Hick, Melbourne St West, gardener. New paling hut, only one in residence.

Chung Ah Loon, Glen Dhu St. South, gardener. Self-contained old dilapidated brick house. Floors on the ground. Two bedrooms occupied by four men.

Ah Looey and Wong Hon, Westbury Road (west side), gardeners. Two men occupy two paling huts, the southern one being the older. The stable is very close to the northern one. All the sheds are grouped together.

Hew Sing, Mulgrave St. (Gee's Estate), gardeners. Galvanised iron hut. Three rooms - two bedrooms, occupied by four men.

Chung Gong, Mulgrave St. (Bryan's Estate), gardener. Paling hut, two rooms - no one in residence.

Ah Youey, Mulgrave and Howick Streets (white's Estate). One man living in two-roomed paling hut - another two-roomed hut empty.

Sue Loong, 42 George St. laundryman. Brick walls, wooden faces, cement floors. Three rooms, dilapidated - formerly a hay and corn store. One man resident.

A.L. Wee, 40 Tamar St. laundryman. Three rooms - occupier sleeps in shop - a very poor place.

Sung Kwong Wing & Co. 105 St. John Street, storekeepers. Three rooms on ground and three on first floor. Four men in residence, one sleeping in stone store. Ceilings, walls, floors and windows, exceedingly dirty. This place is termed a "company" - apparently a club.

Ah Wing & Ah Kim, Herbert Str. Invermay, gardeners. The former lives in good weatherboard hut of two rooms, three men in residence. The latter lives in two-roomed paling hut which is dilapidated and lies to the south of that occupied by Ah Wing. One man in residence.

Loong Akn, Lytton St., gardener. Old four-roomed cottage. One man in residence.

Ah Woon, Mayne St. (formerly Ward's Estate). Tumble-down disreputable premises not fit for a dog to live in. One man resident

Lew Nem, David St. Comparatively new four-roomed weather board hut - five men resident.

Willie Sei Yick & Yong Lee, Abbott St. Two-roomed paling hut, occupied by former, floor on ground. Latter occupied two roomed paling addition - back to back. Two men in residence. Poor premises.

Kee Shing, Erina Street, gardener (Clear's Estate). Two-roomed old paling hut - skillion back has flat shut roof - very poor place, is not drained and must be damp. Floor on ground. Two men in residence.

All the men, saving those at 105 St. John Street, appear to be clean and comfortable., having good beds and plenty of firewood.

Obediently yours,

L. GREY THOMPSON.

Appendix 4.

The Mandarin Debate

The circumstances under which citizens of Launceston can learn Mandarin are less than ideal. Aside from the actual shortcomings in the method of teaching the language in this manner, the classes also have a number of problems of their own. The classes are run independently of schools except for the use of their facilities out of hours and therefore lack the economic and structural support of the institution. They are open to anyone at any standard and this causes problems by placing heavy demands upon the teachers to try and cater to varying standards and ages in students. The classes are run outside of school hours yet are run in a school setting by school-teaching methods. Keeping the interest and attention of children under these circumstances, who would probably far rather be out enjoying their free time like the rest of their friends, can be difficult²²². Interested members of the Chinese community have attempted to rectify the problems. The obvious solution to the problems of running Mandarin classes as an extra-curricular activity would be to try and get it offered in schools as a subject option. Charles Chan, in his 1996-7 President's report for the Launceston Chinese Association outlined the action taken thus far in promoting the augmentation and extension of the Mandarin teaching program in Launceston, particularly in trying to have them introduced as part of the school curricula. He wrote that:

This year I have made strong representations to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Ethnic Affairs in maintaining and developing the teaching of Mandarin in Launceston. I must admit the outcome is not optimistic although both Ministers appear sympathetic. This because of the lack of government funding and that Mandarin at the moment is not a recognised second language in Tasmanian schools. The four recognised second languages are French, German, Japanese and Indonesian. The solution is to convince the government to raise the status of Mandarin and this will be a long process involving input from the Department of Education, University, Employers Organisation, Unions, Community Organisations of which the Launceston Chinese Association is one component. Of immediate assistance to the survival of Mandarin Classes is for members and their friends to enrol children in the classes. In the meantime the Launceston Chinese Association together with other groups will continue to argue for better recognition of Mandarin as a priority second language.²²³

There have been a number of obstacles to this objective. Despite incentive schemes to encourage teachers to encourage teachers to learn how to teach a second language, Mandarin is so different in form and structure from English that it is a very difficult language to learn, and teaching it is even more difficult.²²⁴ Therefore, understandably, teachers have tended to opt for alternative languages such as Indonesian. In response to this situation, Charles Chan proposed a solution. He said that his: "proposition is to turn the thing around - in other words, yes - you can encourage people who are already teachers to learn how to teach a second language. But...why don't you also look at the point of trying to encourage native speaker of ...Chinese to make them teachers."²²⁵ The same suggestion was made more than twenty years ago at the Multi-Cultural Conference, where it was noted that "There are difficulties in finding language teachers, not because of lack of people capable of teaching the language, but because, very often, of unacceptable academic qualifications"²²⁶ Adding to this problem is the large number of existing language teachers trained in French and German and Indonesian. It is simply easier to let them carry on teaching these languages for which there are staff and educational infrastructure for examinations and assessments. To change the system would require a large effort. Another problem is the small size of the Chinese community in Launceston. Charles Chan pointed out that "in Victoria and in New South Wales...in particular in Sydney and Melbourne, I suppose the number of Chinese are sufficient to exert influence on governing bodies, to actually spend more resources on education along those lines. But here I think it is still a difficult situation"²²⁷

²²² Charles Chan, Op Cit. p.7

²²³ LCA Newsletter, Spring Issue, September 1997, p.7

²²⁴ Charles Chan, Op Cit. p.10

²²⁵ Ibid, p.10

²²⁶ Lloyd, E. Op Cit, p.107

²²⁷ Charles Chan, Op Cit. p.10

Appendix 5.

The Dragon Boat Festival

The Fifth Moon

The "Double fifth" is the Chinese summer holiday and is marked by the Dragon Boat Races which are a great feature of Hong Kong. The main contests take place just inside the Western limits of the harbour, off the swimming club at Port Kennedy Town, where eight or nine boats compete. There is also a large crowd at Aberdeen to see the two local dragons fight it out with visitors from Stanley and Lamma Island. The races commemorate the death of a virtuous official Ch'ü Yuan, whose body was never found when he drowned himself in the T'ing T'ing lake to lend force to his unheeded protests about the decadence of the court and the consequent collapse of the government. The basis of the feast is roast pork, but the essential concomitant has a religious significance as the recipe is alleged to have been furnished by none other than the Patron Saint. When the spirit of the virtuous Ch'ü Yuan appeared to the villagers who had been casting their bread upon the waters for his sustenance it complained that a monster intercepted the gifts and suggested a remedy. The sacrifices were to be wrapped in pointed leaves resembling the demon-dispelling sword to ensure their safe delivery. In Hong Kong specially selected leaves of bamboo are sold to wrap the Ch'ün Tze, as the cakes are called. The foundation is glutinous rice with green beans, pork, lotus seeds and the yolk of a salted egg as ingredients. Each portion is then boiled for four hours. Ch'ü Yuan prescribed that the bundles should be tied with silk threads of the five colours; red, yellow, blue, black and white, but this practise has fallen into disuse and a sort of raffia is used to keep the packet from falling apart. Confectioners make these cakes in all sizes to suit every purse and they are eaten all over the country.²²⁸

²²⁸ Reproduced from the LCA Newsletter, Winter Issue, 1996

Appendix 6.



Dinner & Concert at the Novotel

The Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust *in conjunction with the*
 Launceston Chinese Association *present a feast of*
 Traditional Chinese Music *by*



CLIFFORD
 CRAIG
 MEDICAL
 RESEARCH
 TRUST



賴有歌梁合
 生
 飛
 一
 半
 來

徒
 聞
 弦
 管
 切
 不
 見
 舞
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the Australian Chinese Ensemble

Place: Novotel Launceston

Time: 7.00pm Saturday 26th September 1998

Tickets: \$30 (includes 3 course dinner)

available from: Fortunes Booking Office, Charles Street
 Clifford Craig Trust Office, Ph6332 7010
 Canton Restaurant, 203 Charles Street
 Wok & Grill Restaurant, 313 Wellington Street



Assisted by the State Government
 through the
 Communities Tasmania Grants Program
 from the Community Support Levy

There is another performance at the

Queen Victoria Museum, Wellington Street
 Sunday 27th September 1998 3.00pm - 4.30pm

Tickets: School children \$4, Concession (Pension and other students) \$5
 Members of LCA and Friends of Museum \$8, Others \$10

available from: Queen Victoria Museum, Canton Restaurant, Wok & Grill Restaurant

Table 1.

Chinese in Australia, by colonies, 1861-1901

COLONY	M/F/P +	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
N.S.W.	m	12986	7208	10141	13048	10063
	f	2	12	64	109	159
	p	12988	7220	10205	13157	10222
Vic.	m	24724	17795	11795	8355	6236
	f	8	31	164	134	111
	p	24732	17826	11959	8489	6347
Qld.	m	573	3304	11206	8497	7637
	f	1	1	23	27	35
	p	538	3305	11229	8524	7672
S.A.	m	*	*	346	180	270
	f	*	*	1	2	17
	p	*	*	347	182	287
W.A.	m	*	*	144	914	1503
	f	*	*	1	3	18
	p	*	*	145	917	1521
Tas.	m	*	*	842	931	482
	f	*	*	1	3	18
	p	*	*	145	917	1521
N.T.	m	*	*	3800	3598	2962
	f	*	*	4	15	110
	p	*	*	3804	3613	3072
Australia #	m	38247	28307	38274	35523	29153
	f	11	44	259	298	474
	p	38258	28351	38533	35821	29627

+ Males/Females/Persons

* Not Available

N.S.W., Vic. and Qld only for 1861 and 1871

Sources: *Official Yearbook for the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1925, pp.951-7.
Queensland 1871 Census.

Table 2.

Number of Miners employed in Alluvial and Quartz Mining on North East and East Coast from 1886-1900.²²⁹

Year	N/E Chinese	N/E Europeans	N/E Subtotal	East Chinese	East Europeans	TOTAL
1882						1716
1886	520	450	970	227	114	1311
1887	648	414	1062	*	*	*
1888	605	385	990	*	*	*
1891	# 436	262	748	*	*	*
1892	375	250	625	*	*	*
1896	303	275	578	152	376	1106
1897	244	256	500	82	630	1212
1898	196	256	452	70	567	1089
1899	180	272	452	63	599	1114
1900	173	336	509	76	755	1340

* Figures not Available

There is a discrepancy with the 1891 Census indicating 695 Chinese Tin Miners in the North East

Source: Easteal, B.V. 1966, *The Chinese in Tasmania: 1870-1900*, B.A. (Hons) Thesis, University of Tasmania (Unpublished)

²²⁹ The reader should beware that these figures are from the Secretary of Mines unsourced reports and are possibly only approximations. They are a good indication, however, of the ratios of Chinese to Europeans in the areas indicated.

Table 3.

Source: Census of Tasmania, 1891: Number of Chinese males in Tasmania, Electoral Districts, Occupations, Education and Age Groups²³⁰

Occupation	Total	Read/ Write	Read	Can't Read	Read/ Write*	Age -20	Age -45	Age -65	Hobart	Launceston	Other
Blacksmith	1				1			1			1
Bootmaker	5				5		3	2			5
Butcher	1				1		1				1
Cabinetmaker	7			1	6			1	6	1	
Carpenter	1				1		6	1			1
Merchant Clerk	1	1								1	
Commission Agent	2				2		1	1			2
Cook	6	2		1	3		1	1	1	2	3
Faillmonger	1		1				5	1	1		
Fisherman	1				1						1
Fishcurer	2				2		1	2			2
Fruiterer	3				3			1		2	1
Market Gardener	122	31	1	14	74	4	2	24	20	21	72
Hawker	9			2	7		88	5	2	5	2
Jeweller	2				2		4	2			2
Temple-Keeper	1				1			1			1
Flour-Mill Labourer	1				1			1	1		
Saw-Mill Labourer	1							1			1
Lodging-House Keeper	8			1	5			2		1	7
Lottery Keeper	7	1		2	7			7			7
Medical Practitioner (Irregular)	2				2			1			2
General Merchant	4				1						1
Minister of Religion	1	3			1						1
Mine Owner	2				2						2
Alluvial Tin Miner	695	3	7	108	573	7	410	270		1	694
Packers	2			1	1		1	1			2
Domestic Servants	2		1		1		2		1	1	
General Storekeepers	34	1		4	29	2	18	14	1	3	31
Stationers	1			1			1		1		
Tailors	1				1		1	1			1
Tobacconists	1			1		1			1		
Wood-Cutters	3				3		2	1			3
Not Stated	1			1					1		
TOTAL	931	42	10	137	736	13	547	342	37	39	859

*Proficiency in a language other than English

²³⁰ The Table is not complete; some fields of no relevance to this study are not included and therefore not all columns add up correctly

Table 4.

Source: Census of Tasmania, 1901: Number of Chinese, Electoral Districts, Occupations, Education and Age²³¹

Occupation	Total	read/ write	read	can't read	read/ write*	Age -20	Age -25	Age -45	Age -65	Age 65+	Hobart	Launceston	Other
Breadwinners (Males)													
Bootmaker	1	1							1				1
Cabinetmaker	1			1						1	1		
Carpenter	1			1						1			1
Cook	4	2			2			3	1		1		3
Farmer	2			1	1			1	1				2
Farm Labourer	19	3		2	14		1	18					19
Market Gardener	146	23	13	43	65	1	15	96	30	3	6	33	97
Greengrocer	5	3			2			5					5
Hawker	1	1							1		1		
Temple Keeper	2				2				1	1			2
General Merchant	7	4	1	1	1			5	2		4	3	
Tin Miners	238			31	207	1		93	119	25			238
General Servant	3	2		1		1		2		1	2		
Store Assistant	17	3			10	2	1	12	2		2	4	11
Store Keeper	15	7		1	7	1		7	6	1			15
Tobacconist	1	1							1		1		
Total Males	463	50	14	82	311	6	17	242	165	32	17	42	408
Breadwinners (Females)													
Domestic-servant	2	1			1	2							2
Total Breadwinners	465	51	14	82	312	8	17	242	165	32	17	42	410
Dependants (Males)													
Hospital Patient	2			2					1	1			2
Scholar	7	6	1			7					2	1	4
Sons	10	1		9		10							10
Total Males	19	7	1	11		17			1	1	2	1	16
Dependants (Females)													
Daughters	7	1		6		7					1	2	4
Scholar	8	6		2		8						2	6
Wives	6	2		1	3			6			1	1	4
Hospital Patient	1			1		1					1		
Total Females	22	9		10	3	16		6			3	5	14
Total Dependants	41	16	1	21	3	33		6	1	1	5	6	38
TOTAL CHINESE	506	67	15	103	315	41	17	248	166	33	22	48	440

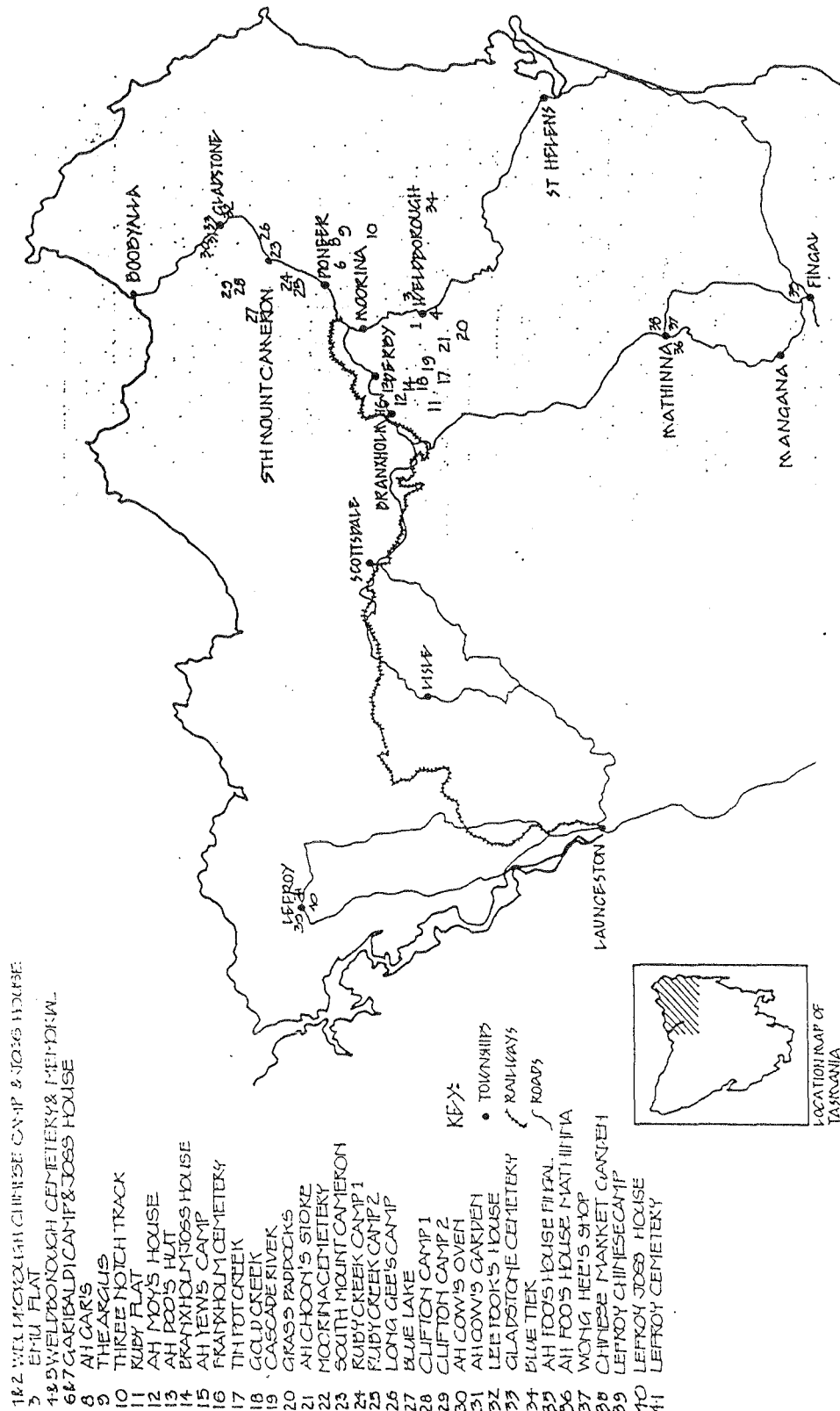
*Proficiency in a language other than English

²³¹ The Table is not complete; some fields of no relevance to this study are not included and therefore not all columns add up correctly

Map 1.

Map of North-Eastern Tasmanian tin-mining district with locations of sites relevant to the Chinese community.

Source: Helen Vivian, 1985, *Tasmania's Chinese Heritage: An Historical Account of Chinese sites in North East Tasmania*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston



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Because of the differences between word orders for names amongst Chinese names, Australian names, and Australianised Chinese names, the names of oral sources have been presented in the order in which they are pronounced, with surnames underlined

**References to Interviews of David Kuo, Irving Fong and Lew Sing refer to page numbers in the extracts printed in Launceston Talks: Oral Histories of the Launceston Community unless indicated as material not included in the extract.*

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